

# Martha...

## Worried and Troubled

**Lesson 11**  
Written by Gloria Scholten

### Introduction

As women, we spend much of our days serving others as we attempt to be the perfect wife, mother and daughter. Taking care of our loved ones can be joyful and fulfilling at one moment and a daunting task the next. Dinner, baseball games, choir and doctor appointments can be exhausting. Although much of it we knew we signed up for, we can quickly begin to feel overworked and unappreciated. If we are not careful, this attitude could cause us to become bitter and resentful. It's important we remember our relationship with Christ is the key to living out His purpose for each one of us daily. Our role as women has been ordained by Him to bring Him praise, honor and glory.

Martha was a true servant of God. She always had an open door and a heart to serve. But like many of us, her heart to serve began to change as the act of *service* became more important than the one she was serving: our Lord. As her feelings of anxiety and worry grew so did her frustration with those around her. We see Christ gently remind Martha that time with Him is important; a lesson that speaks loudly and clearly to us all.

We are first introduced to Martha about six months before the crucifixion of Christ. Her story begins as Jesus comes to stay in the home she shared with her siblings, Mary and Lazarus. They lived in the town of Bethany and were thought to be an influential family known by all in the city. Martha's home became a frequent place of refuge and rest for Jesus and His disciples. His friendship and love for this family was well known.

### Study and Personal Questions

1. We see in Scripture Jesus going to the home of Martha on two separate occasions. Read Luke 10:38-42, John 11:1-44 and John 12:1-3. Record your thoughts concerning:

Martha

Mary

Lazarus

As we begin to unpack the life of Martha, carefully read Luke 10:38-42.

2. What does verse 38 say about how Martha responded when Jesus arrived at her home?
3. The word welcome in the Greek is *Hypedexato* which means to receive as a guest. Receiving guests into your home was common in this culture and a form of hospitality. What do the following verses say about the attitude we should have as we serve others?

1 Peter 4:9

Colossians 3:23, 24

Our service to Christ should be motivated by a heart to please Him and a desire to bring His name honor and glory in all we do. Taking time to examine our hearts before we serve God and others will ensure our service is from a pure heart.

4. At first glance what do we see Mary doing in Luke 10:39?
5. What does verse 39 tell you about Mary and her understanding of the importance of spending time with Jesus?
6. What does Mary's posture in verse 39 have in common when looking at these two verses:

John 11:32

John 12:3

7. Three times in Scripture we are shown Mary at the feet of Jesus. This shows a stark contrast between Martha and Mary. We see Martha serving anxiously and busy taking care of the work at hand. Read Luke 10:38-42. What does it say about Martha and her focus while serving in Luke 10:40a?

8. Read 1 Corinthians 7:35 and record the way we are meant to serve the Lord.

9. Martha is serving while being completely distracted. Her attitude reveals to us she is becoming bitter and resentful of the task in front of her. Read these verses and tell what each one says to you about what our service to God and others should look like.

Romans 12:1

Romans 12:10, 11

Ephesians 6:6-8

10. When we look at Martha it can be easy for us to relate to what she is experiencing. We often take on responsibilities and then become frustrated. We begin to serve the Lord and somehow in the middle of our service we change our focus from Christ and put it on ourselves. We begin to rely on our own abilities and try to accomplish the work in our own strength. Read John 15:5. What does this reveal to you?

11. Martha begins to question Jesus in Luke 10:40.

a. What does Martha ask Jesus?

b. What does Martha tell Jesus to do?

12. Often when things do not go the way we planned, we, like Martha, begin to question God and ask Him, *“Don’t you care about what I’m going through? I need help now! Why are you just sitting back, God, and allowing this to happen?”* Can you relate to Martha?

13. Share an experience when while serving the Lord you realized it had somehow shifted from being about Him to being about you? What did you do, if anything, to redirect your focus back to the Lord?
14. Martha decided the work she was doing was the most important at that moment and we see Jesus gently rebuke her in verses 41 and 42. What does He tell her in verse 41?
15. How often do you become worried and troubled about things that are not of eternal value? In what ways does taking your eyes off Jesus change how you serve Him?
16. In verse 42, what does Jesus tell Martha?
17. What is the one thing that was needed?
18. Jesus states that Mary had “chosen” the one thing that was needed...Himself! Do you recognize that the time we spend with Jesus is our choice? What we fill our days with and are distracted by is a daily decision we must make. Are you choosing God daily?
19. If you are not choosing Him, what are the choices you are making instead of Him?
20. At the end of verse 42, what did Jesus mean when He told her the part which Mary had chosen would never be taken away from her? How does this bring you comfort?
21. Time with Jesus is always the better choice. God’s word is our lifeline to a closer relationship with Him and knowing Him more intimately. What do these verses say about God?

Job 33:4

2 Timothy 3:16

Romans 8:37-39

**Read John 11:1-44**

22. What does John 11:5 tell us about how Jesus felt about Martha?
23. Martha's brother Lazarus had become very ill and, immediately, she and Mary sent a messenger to Jesus telling Him in verse 3, *Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick*. Martha's hope was Jesus would return in time to heal Lazarus but it took four days for Christ to arrive in Bethany. What do you think Martha was thinking as she waited for Jesus to arrive?
24. What does Martha do in John 11:20 when she hears Jesus was coming?
25. Martha was a woman who never seemed to sit back and wait. We see that she ran out to meet Jesus. What does she say to Him in verses 21 and 22?
26. Read John 11:23-26. What does Jesus reveal to Martha?
27. What does Martha claim to profess about Jesus in verse 27?
28. Contemplating those verses, why do you think Martha responds the way she does in John 11:39?

29. We may profess faith in Christ and believe Him to be our Lord and Savior but how often, like Martha, do we doubt He will do what we know He is able? What does Jesus ask Martha in verse 40?

Martha did not fully understand what Jesus meant until Lazarus was raised from the dead. Jesus proves to be faithful to the promise He gave her in John 11:23 that her brother would rise again. We see, despite Martha's lack of understanding and doubt, that Christ remained faithful. He is the same today; faithful to fulfill His promises to us as well. Yet, we often misunderstand His plan for our lives.

30. The more time Martha spent with Jesus, the more she began to know His character and to know Him more intimately. At times their relationship came with corrections and reminders of God's purpose on earth through the life of Jesus (John 11:40 and Luke 10:40). Christ's gentle rebukes of Martha is something we should all take note of...Martha did! Martha allowed God's correction to change her heart and this then changed the way she served Him and others. How are you encouraged by this?

## Discovering Jesus in the Story

1. According to the Bible verses we've studied this week, what revelation did you personally receive about or from Jesus Christ Himself?

## Reflection

2. Write a short paragraph explaining how the life of **Martha** has impacted your life, challenged you or corrected you concerning your choices.

## A Hero's Vignette

### Elisabeth Elliot<sup>1</sup>

Elisabeth Elliot was called by the Lord at a young age to serve in the mission field and nothing would stop her from answering God's call. God had placed a desire on her heart for many years to go to Ecuador and share the gospel.

Elisabeth was born December 21, 1926 in Brussels, Belgium. She was a child of Christian missionary parents and was one of six children. Her family moved from Belgium to a German town in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania when she was only a few months old. Her family later moved to New Jersey where Elisabeth stayed until she attended Wheaton College.

While at Wheaton, she met her future husband Jim Elliot. Jim also shared the same passion for missionary work and he, too, felt called to Ecuador. After graduating, both moved to Ecuador where they served together and ministered to the Quechua Indians. The two married in 1953 in the city of Quito. Jim's desire was to minister to the unreached tribes in the most rural areas. Although this was known to be extremely dangerous, Jim was determined. The Auca tribe was in that category. This was a fierce group that no one had successfully met with without being killed. When Jim and four other missionaries saw an opportunity, they went to speak to three tribal members. All five missionaries were speared to death at that meeting.

Jim and Elisabeth's daughter, Valerie, was only 10 months old at the time when Jim was killed and Elisabeth made the decision to stay and minister to the very people who murdered her husband. She was quoted as saying about the men who killed her husband:

*"The Auca was trying to preserve his own way of life, his own liberty," she wrote in Life magazine in 1961. "He believed the foreigners were a threat to that liberty, so he feels he had every right to kill them. In America, we decorate a man for defending his country."*<sup>2</sup>

Elisabeth returned to the United States with her daughter, Valerie, in 1963 and spent the remainder of her life speaking about her experiences and writing books. She spent her life devoted to Christ and sharing the gospel. Elisabeth died June 15, 2015 in her home at the age of 88 in Magnolia, Massachusetts.

1. How does Elisabeth's life encourage you, challenge you?

*Challenge question:*

2. Are there any Bible verses that come to mind after reading about her life?

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.elisabethelliott.org/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://mobile.nytimes.com/2015/06/18/us/elisabeth-elliott-tenacious-missionary-to-ecuador-dies-at-88.html>