

The Real Reason Martha Wasn't in Line With Jesus' Will

I've been thinking about Martha, one of the most seemingly cantankerous women in the Bible. She's painted as the ugly villain, the stingy shrew. But when I hear her story told. Inwardly I'm shouting, "Unfair!" If Martha and I took personality or career aptitude tests, our results would be identical. I understand what made her tick. But her virtues are overlooked when compared to her siblings.

I'm here to set the record straight.

Let's recap Luke 10. Jesus and his followers were walking to Jerusalem when they stopped in Bethany. This is where Martha, Mary and Lazarus share a home. Now, every good hostess knows when visitors arrive, even unannounced ones, you'd better roll out the welcome mat. Martha assesses this, practical and organized girl that she is, and heads off to the kitchen to get cracking. Nobody gets overlooked on her watch.

The Scene of the 'Crime'

Meanwhile, everyone else was chilling in the living room. We've all been to parties with that one guest the group flocks to, who lights up the room. That is Jesus times 100. Even Mary plunks herself down at Jesus' feet (uncouth for a woman in their culture). Mary's personality is more carefree. She's the baby sister, never weighed down with being in charge. As such, it's easier for her to live in the moment. Mary naturally grasps the beautiful opportunity at hand. She isn't distracted by decorum or duty. However, the crowd would be starving by sundown if we left it up to her.

Speaking of which, Martha is furiously whipping up dinner. Shouting orders, wiping her brow and laying out a spread fit for a King (pun intended). Not only is she bustling outward,

she is churning inside. Her irritation festers and compels her out the kitchen door. The joyful cadence of Jesus' discourse is interrupted as she bellows, "Jesus! Doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me." Instantaneously, a painful silence settles over the room. Uh-oh, there went the welcome mat.

The Verdict

Jesus gazes up at her, eye to eye. He patiently finds his voice. "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her."

I see this scene vividly. I've lived it. I've been there as a mom, as a wife, as a ministry team member. I've been the turbulent woman who shocked a joyful room into silence. I've been the woman who missed her beautiful opportunity in jealousy over someone else's. Ouch.

Martha Matters

Was Martha bad? Was she less valuable than her kid sister? No. Each sister was gifted with an opportunity uniquely suited to the woman the Creator designed her to be. Martha, the ever-prepared and thoughtful caretaker: to make a meal for the Messiah. Mary, the fearless and cheerful hostess: to set the tone in the room for him. The difference is Mary lived wholeheartedly in the moment and Martha let herself be duped out of the joy available. She believed her role was lesser and her value lower.

Martha was in the right room. She was doing the right thing, but she stepped out of the joy. I will always strongly identify with Martha. This is who I am, unashamedly. The difference is I see now where my strengths lie and that I'm deeply loved by my Creator. I am not overlooked.

Winning

I am designed on purpose; surrounded with rare people (my family) and moments hand-selected to help me thrive. This fills me up inside. I don't waste time wallowing in angst or frustration. I feel free to speak up or slow down when necessary because I have nothing to prove. I recharge and live wholeheartedly with these boundaries, especially with my family. I'm not perfect. Sometimes the meal I offer is burnt, so to speak. But I'm more joyful, thankful and connected to life than I have ever been before.

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