



MARY'S CHOICE

One of Jesus' favorite places to visit was Bethany (about two miles from Jerusalem), the hometown of His friend Lazarus (the one whom Jesus raised to life) and his two sisters, Martha and Mary. In one of His visits (**Luke 10:38-41**), Martha complained to Jesus about her sister. Mary was not helping Martha in the preparations in the kitchen. Instead, she was spending too much time listening to Jesus. Mary *"sat at Jesus' feet."*

"Please tell Mary to help me," Martha asked Jesus. His reply to Martha's request is more than interesting, it is instructive as to what is to be our priority as Christ's followers. Jesus told Martha, *"You are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."* (**Luke 10:41** NKJV)

Jesus stated that Mary had made the right choice – something "which will not be taken away from her." What did He mean? What choices did Mary had to choose from?

Many people think that the Christian life is about choosing between good and evil. But that is really not the case. Most of the time, the choice really is between good and necessary things. Rather than having to choose to exclude bad things from our lives, we have to make choices about prioritizing good things. Due to our busyness or just plain poor time management, our most important decisions are about where we will spend most of our limited time.

Both Martha and Mary illustrate our choices in daily life. The story tells about Martha being *"distracted with much serving"* as opposed to Mary who was seen sitting *"at Jesus' feet."* Neither of these activities, by itself, is better than the other, in terms of moral goodness. Martha chose ministry because she could not ignore the fact that there was much to be done in order to serve her Lord. Mary, on the other hand, chose to sit at the feet of Christ because she wanted to listen to Him.

Jesus invites people to **ministry and intimacy**. **Ministry** is important because the Kingdom of God is about serving. Jesus exemplified this in His earthly life. **Intimacy** with God is also important because we were made for a love relationship with our Creator and with each other. As citizens of the Kingdom, we are called to love God totally and serve others unselfishly. Was Jesus commending Mary for choosing one over the other? For choosing intimacy over ministry? I don't think so.

I believe that Christ was speaking about our priorities. Mary chose to make **intimacy with Jesus** her priority. Martha chose to make **ministry to Jesus** her priority. It is clear that Jesus approved Mary's choice, but not because ministry is unimportant. While Martha's motive in serving Christ is unquestioned, she is chided for being

"worried and troubled about many things." Martha is feeling the stress of service, while Mary, on the other hand, is just relaxed, sitting at the feet of Jesus.

Jesus said that Mary's time spent getting close to Him is something *"which will not be taken away from her."* Time spent in serving Christ – in order to get things done – caused Martha to be worried and troubled because **she gave intimacy with Him less priority than working for Him**. Here, Jesus is teaching His followers that while ministry and intimacy are both important in the Christian life, intimacy must have priority in our lives because **our ministry must flow out of our intimate relationship with Christ**.

Our service must be motivated by our love for Jesus. What will motivate us to continue serving God and others if we not prioritize intimacy with Him? When we don't have love as our motive for service, our tendency is to become legalistic about what we're doing for God. The work ceases to be a labor of love. We remain unfulfilled, regardless of how much we have accomplished. Like Martha, we become worried and troubled about many things. In such a mental state, we become easy prey to God's enemy. Satan steals our peace and we become critics and complainers, instead of lovers.

According to Jesus, Mary's choice – intimacy with God – is something no one can steal or take away. It becomes the fountainhead of our loving relationships and ministry. The Gospels record the loving ministry of Mary to her Lord. She contributed her resources to support His ministry (**Luke 8:1-3**). She anointed Jesus' feet with expensive perfume, using up her life savings, thereby demonstrating extravagant worship for all time (**John 12:1-8**). Mary witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus (**John 19:25**) and she watched as He was buried in the tomb (**Matt. 27:61**). It became Mary's privilege to be the first person to see the risen Christ (**Mark 16:9**) and the first to speak to Him (**John 20:11-18**) after the Resurrection.

More than any other disciple or person, Mary served her Lord in a personal way. Her life demonstrated that **intimacy with Christ results in loving ministry to Christ**. On the other hand, the Gospels do not record Martha personally ministering to Christ again.

Everyday, what do you choose as your priority? Is it Martha's choice or Mary's choice? **Only the Marys of this world can offer God loving service and extravagant worship because their priority is pursuing intimacy with God**. We have a God who loves us completely and who desperately needs us to reveal His love to a dying world. But only those who choose intimacy with God can truly become a part of Christ's loving community.

We were created for an intimate relationship with God. This is the main thing. So let's keep it the main thing.