

7 JANUARY 2026

MARY OF BETHANY DEVOTION OVER PERFORMANCE

"SHE CHOSE WHAT IS BETTER." (LUKE 10:42)

OPENING: WHY WE BEGIN HERE

AS WE STEP INTO A NEW YEAR, MANY OF US FEEL PRESSURE TO:

- IMPROVE OURSELVES
- SET GOALS
- FIX WHAT FEELS BROKEN
- STAY MOTIVATED

BUT JESUS NEVER BEGAN WITH PRESSURE.
HE ALWAYS BEGAN WITH PRESENCE.

BEFORE HE ASKED PEOPLE TO DO ANYTHING,
HE INVITED THEM TO BE WITH HIM.

THAT IS WHY WE BEGIN THIS YEAR WITH MARY OF BETHANY .
A WOMAN WHO SHOWS US THAT DEVOTION MATTERS MORE THAN
PERFORMANCE.

WHO IS MARY OF BETHANY?

MARY OF BETHANY LIVED IN A SMALL VILLAGE NEAR JERUSALEM.
SHE WAS THE SISTER OF MARTHA AND LAZARUS.

SHE IS MENTIONED THREE TIMES IN SCRIPTURE AND EVERY SINGLE TIME,
MARY IS FOUND AT THE FEET OF JESUS.

THIS IS NOT ACCIDENTAL.
THIS IS REVELATION.

MARY SHOWS US WHAT NON-PERFORMATIVE DEVOTION LOOKS LIKE , AND
THROUGH HER STORY, WE SEE THE HEART OF JESUS TOWARD WOMEN.

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1.MARY SITS AT JESUS' FEET (LUKE 10:38–42)

THE MOMENT:

JESUS VISITS THE HOME OF MARY AND MARTHA.

MARTHA IS BUSY SERVING , DOING GOOD, NECESSARY THINGS.

MARY CHOOSES SOMETHING DIFFERENT: SHE SITS AT JESUS' FEET AND LISTENS.

MARTHA BECOMES FRUSTRATED AND ASKS JESUS TO TELL MARY TO HELP HER.

INSTEAD, JESUS GENTLY RESPONDS THAT MARY HAS CHOSEN WHAT IS BETTER, AND THAT IT WILL NOT BE TAKEN FROM HER.

REVELATION

JESUS IS NOT REBUKING SERVICE ,
HE IS CORRECTING PRIORITY.

MARY CHOOSES PRESENCE OVER PRODUCTIVITY.

THIS SHOWS US SOMETHING IMPORTANT ABOUT JESUS:

- HE WELCOMES WOMEN AS DISCIPLES
- HE VALUES LISTENING OVER STRIVING
- HE DOES NOT MEASURE DEVOTION BY BUSYNESS

KEY TRUTH:

JESUS DOES NOT COMPETE WITH OUR ACTIVITY, HE INVITES OUR ATTENTION.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- WHERE HAVE I CONFUSED BEING BUSY FOR BEING CLOSE TO JESUS?
- WHAT DISTRACTIONS KEEP ME FROM SITTING AT HIS FEET?
- WHAT WOULD CHOOSING “WHAT IS BETTER” LOOK LIKE FOR ME RIGHT NOW?

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2.MARY WEEPS AT JESUS' FEET (JOHN 11)

THE MOMENT:

LAZARUS DIES.

MARTHA RUNS OUT TO MEET JESUS.

MARY STAYS BEHIND UNTIL JESUS CALLS FOR HER.
WHEN MARY COMES, SHE FALLS AT HIS FEET AND SAYS,
“LORD, IF YOU HAD BEEN HERE...”

SHE DOESN'T HIDE HER PAIN.
SHE DOESN'T PRETEND SHE'S OKAY.

REVELATION:

JESUS DOES NOT CORRECT HER GRIEF.
HE DOES NOT RUSH HER HEALING.
INSTEAD, JESUS WEEPS.

THIS REVEALS HIS HEART:

- JESUS WELCOMES WOMEN'S EMOTIONS
- HE IS NOT THREATENED BY SORROW
- HE ENTERS PAIN BEFORE HE FIXES IT

KEY TRUTH:

YOU DO NOT NEED STRONG FAITH TO BE CLOSE TO JESUS YOU NEED AN HONEST HEART.

MARY TEACHES US THAT DEVOTION INCLUDES LAMENT, NOT JUST PRAISE.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- WHERE AM I HOLDING PAIN INSTEAD OF BRINGING IT TO JESUS?
- DO I BELIEVE JESUS CARES ABOUT MY GRIEF?
- WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE TO BE FULLY HONEST WITH HIM?

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3.MARY ANOINTS JESUS' FEET (JOHN 12)

THE MOMENT:

MARY POURS EXPENSIVE PERFUME OVER JESUS' FEET AND WIPES THEM WITH HER HAIR.

OTHERS CALL IT WASTEFUL.

JESUS CALLS IT BEAUTIFUL.

HE EXPLAINS THAT MARY UNDERSTOOD SOMETHING OTHERS MISSED ,
THAT HE WAS PREPARING TO DIE.

REVELATION:

MARY RECOGNISED JESUS' HEART BECAUSE SHE HAD SPENT TIME AT HIS FEET.

HER DEVOTION WAS NOT LOUD.

IT WAS NOT STRATEGIC.

IT WAS INTIMATE AND DISCERNING.

JESUS DEFENDS HER WORSHIP PUBLICLY.

KEY TRUTH:

DEVOTION OFTEN LOOKS WASTEFUL TO PEOPLE WHO DON'T UNDERSTAND INTIMACY.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- WHAT WOULD WHOLEHEARTED WORSHIP LOOK LIKE FOR ME?
- AM I MORE CONCERNED WITH OPINIONS OR OBEDIENCE?
- WHAT HAS TIME WITH JESUS REVEALED TO ME ABOUT HIS HEART?

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4. WHAT MARY TEACHES US ABOUT JESUS' HEART TOWARD WOMEN.

THROUGH MARY OF BETHANY, WE SEE THAT JESUS:

- INVITES WOMEN INTO DISCIPLESHIP
- WELCOMES THEIR GRIEF
- HONOURS THEIR WORSHIP
- PROTECTS THEIR SPIRITUAL CHOICES
- NEVER RUSHES OR SILENCES THEM

JESUS DID NOT TOUCH WOMEN TO CONTROL THEM.

HE TOUCHED WOMEN TO *RESTORE DIGNITY*.

MARY WASN'T PERFORMING.

SHE WASN'T TRYING TO BE SEEN.

SHE WAS SIMPLY WITH HIM.

5. WHY THIS IS THE RIGHT START FOR THE YEAR

THIS YEAR DOES NOT BEGIN WITH:

- DISCIPLINE
- HUSTLE
- PRESSURE
- PERFECTION

IT BEGINS WITH POSTURE.

MARY REMINDS US:

- BEFORE GOALS → PRESENCE
- BEFORE SERVING → SITTING
- BEFORE MOTIVATION → DEVOTION

WHAT MARY CHOSE, JESUS SAID, WOULD NOT BE TAKEN FROM HER.

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**AS WE BEGIN THIS YEAR, JESUS IS NOT ASKING US:
"WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR ME?"
HE IS ASKING:
"WILL YOU COME SIT WITH ME?"
DEVOTION IS NOT ABOUT TRYING HARDER.
IT IS ABOUT DRAWING CLOSER.
AND CLOSENESS CHANGES EVERYTHING.**

CLOSING PRAYER

FATHER,
WE COME TO YOU NOT WITH PERFORMANCE,
NOT WITH STRIVING,
NOT WITH PRESSURE ,
BUT WITH OPEN HEARTS.

TEACH US TO SIT AT YOUR FEET.
TO LISTEN.
TO REST.
TO BE HONEST.
TO WORSHIP WITHOUT FEAR.

LIKE MARY, WE CHOOSE WHAT IS BETTER.
WE CHOOSE DEVOTION OVER DISTRACTION,
PRESENCE OVER PRESSURE,
AND INTIMACY OVER IMAGE.

AS WE BEGIN THIS YEAR,
ANCHOR US IN YOU, LORD.
MAY NOTHING TAKE AWAY
WHAT WE CHOOSE AT YOUR FEET.
AMEN.