



Mary and Martha

Mary and Martha were the sisters of Lazarus and all lived in Bethany. In Luke 10:38, “as they were traveling” is the present active infinitive of πορεύομαι (poreuomai) and means to go from one place to another - the reality of it. “Welcomed” is the aorist middle indicative of ὑποδέχομαι (hupodechomai) and means to welcome with open arms because of authority or to entertain a guest who carries authority. Martha was the older sister. Martha in receiving the Lord gladly indicated that she was in fellowship with the Lord.

“Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home.” (Luke 10:38, NASB)

In Luke 10:40, “Mary, who was seated” is the aorist passive participle of παρακαθίζομαι (parakathizomai) and means to sit down beside. It has nothing to do with the feet. Martha was out in the kitchen fixing something. Mary sat down beside our Lord and was listening to Him teach. “Listening” is the imperfect active indicative of ἀκούω (akouō) and means she kept on listening to Him. She accepted His authority and was concentrating on what He was saying.

“She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord’s feet, listening to His word.” (Luke 10:39, NASB)

In Luke 10:40, “distracted” is the imperfect passive indicative of περισπάω (perispaō) and means to have your face drawn through pressure, to be distracted, overburdened, to be weighed down and to show it.

“But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.”” (Luke 10:40, NASB)

Mary was sitting down and constantly listening to our Lord teaching whereas Martha was getting overwhelmed with all the work she had to get done by herself. It kept hitting her that she was the only one working to get all of the food ready for so many guests. Both Martha and Mary were doing what they wanted to do. Martha was a hustler and Mary was a listener. But one was upset and the other was not. People can be very different. Here, Martha was a hard worker while Mary was content to sit around and study doctrine. Both were believers, but there is a principle here of live and let live.

The believer who listens to Bible doctrine will always be picked at, downgraded, or bad-mouthed by someone who feels they should be busy doing something productive like cleaning the house or preparing food for guests. For people who hustle and are hard workers, this can be an occupational hazard. They always get overburdened and then get critical. Then there are the ones who want to get Bible doctrine and are inclined to not do anything else. Both sisters are entirely different. Martha had an inclination toward legalism. Mary had an inclination toward grace.

Martha burst in on our Lord while He was teaching and interrupted Him. She just finally blew up. The hustling types always want those who are not doing anything to get busy working on something. There is a place for hustlers, but their occupational hazard is that they just can’t stand people who aren’t doing any physical activity. They are critical of them.

In the light of eternity, what was more important here? There is not a single line in this verse about what food was served. But we have several lines on what was being taught and who was benefiting.



It takes a lot of spiritual maturity to hustle around a kitchen alone when everybody else is sitting in the living room listening to Bible doctrine being taught. It takes a lot of spiritual maturity to stay in fellowship and not get overwhelmed. Remember that if you who are inclined to listen to doctrine all your life, someone is going to be inclined to make an issue of it. You just have to stick with it and listen.

In Luke 10:40, “do You not care” is μέλω (melō) and is an impersonal word and means, “Lord, what about me, don’t you care? I’m not getting any help out there.” “That my sister has left me” is the imperfect active indicative of καταλείπω (kataleipō) meaning that Mary had left her work in the kitchen just to get Bible doctrine from our Lord!

A woman or man out of fellowship can be rude. Martha was being rude and couldn’t imagine anything more important than preparing food for guests. People who are hard workers can often feel alone and inclined to feel sorry for themselves when they are getting no help. They must do their work in fellowship and as unto the Lord! Everybody should have a job at some time or another.

In Luke 10:40, “tell her” is the aorist active imperative of λέγω (legō) and means to tell her right now. “Help me” is the aorist middle subjunctive of συναντιλαμβάνομαι (sunantilambanomai) and means to seize, to take hold (strong) and help. She is just about to shake her sister and drag her into the kitchen.

In Luke 10:41, “you are worried” is the present active indicative of μεριμνάω (merimnaō) and means to be divided in mind and therefore worried. “Bothered” is θορυβάζω (thorubazō) and means to be disturbed because of pressure you have built up within yourself.

“But the Lord answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things;” (Luke 10:41, NASB)

The details of life for a hard worker will be a rough test to pass without many failures. You must stay in fellowship. People are just not wired the same. Whether a hustler or passive type of woman, you are to live your life as unto the Lord. Here, Jesus chastises Martha for her mental attitude sins.

In Luke 10:42, “necessary” is the present active indicative of χρειά (chreia) and means the one thing keeps on being absolutely necessary. What is that? Bible doctrine being taught! It is more important than eating as in Job 23:12. It will always be important. There never will be a time when it is not important.

“but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”“ (Luke 10:42, NASB)

“Mary has chosen” is the aorist middle indicative of ἐκλέγομαι (eklegomai) and means she chosen and benefitted from her choice. “The good part” is ἀγαθός μερίς (agathos meris) and means that Mary has selected the best dish being served. What is that? Bible doctrine, of course.

“Which shall not be taken away from her” is the future passive indicative of ἀφαιρέω (aphaireō) and means will never be cut off from her. The grace lady in fellowship and positive to Bible doctrine has selected the best possible dish of food.

This verse really shows how our Lord handled problems with a subtle sense of humor. Instead of being upset with a friend who had just rudely interrupted His Bible doctrine lesson and was demanding that He force Mary to return to the kitchen to do her work, He calmed Martha down and patiently pointed out to her that Mary had selected the best food which was the teaching of Bible doctrine. He taught her that this spiritual food was far more important than the physical food being served. This food stays with you forever.