

Eat, Drink and Be Mary

by Leslie L. McGee

“Martha opened her home to him [Jesus]. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, ‘Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!’ ‘Martha, Martha,’ the Lord answered, ‘you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.’” (Luke 10:38b-42 (NIV))

What would *you* do in this scenario? If *the* Jesus, *in the flesh*, came to your house, would you find yourself so eager to fulfill his physical needs that you'd try to stop another person from being ministered to in a spiritual way, so she can get to the “more important” work of ministering to others in a physical way?

Or would you be so enamored by this Jesus, so hungry to seize the opportunity to soak up his every word-- his very presence-- that you completely forget that there is dinner to get on?

It seems that Martha was charging Mary with irresponsibility. After all, what would happen if no one cooked? I believe Martha could not let go of this feeling of duty.

But what if Martha knew that the dinner would be taken care of, with or without her and Mary having to fix it? Would she have felt free, at that point, to sit at Jesus' feet also, to learn and grow and be blessed? I believe she would have.

If we knew that all the physical needs of ourselves and those we are “responsible” to provide for (minister to) would be taken care of, would we feel free to spend all the time we wanted in the presence of Jesus, doing nothing “productive” (in the eyes of Martha)? I believe we would.

But could that really happen? If we don't do it, will it truly not get done?

“The disciples came to him [Jesus] and said, ‘this is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.’ Jesus replied, ‘They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.’ ...They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.” (Matthew 14:15,16,20 (NIV))

Jesus says we do not need to leave his presence in order to be fed. Jesus fed this multitude himself. Perhaps if Martha had said to Jesus, “I can't do this myself, please help me,” rather than “tell Mary to help me,” Jesus would have fed the household himself, miraculously, as he did for the 5000, and Martha would have also been freed to sit with Jesus, in peace and freedom.

Because that would have been operating by faith, rather than relying on the strength of the flesh (her's and Mary's) to fill a need. Martha was becoming “worried and upset” because she felt a lack in fleshly strength to get the job

done. She was stressed. Jesus did not design ministry to be a stress on us! Jesus says to us:

“Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear... Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them...

“So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow.” (Matthew 6:25b, 26a.31-34a (NIV))

We are commanded to not worry about the needs of the flesh. God knows, and He provides for them Himself, when we seek God’s Kingdom (living in the Spirit) and righteousness (*“Abraham’s faith was credited to him as righteousness” (Romans 4:9b (NIV))*, first and foremost. Living in faith / in the Spirit is the first thing we should seek to become. Then the fulfillment of the needs of the physical, in God’s plan, will follow.

Jesus told Martha, *“you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better.”*

In Jesus’ point of view Martha did not need to stress herself with what he regarded as secondary, when it would automatically, in the Kingdom, be taken care of, if she were to concern herself with the primary (“only”) need.

When we do that, all our efforts are blessed (With miracles!) and a breeze! Rather than stressful and too big a job to manage.

Jesus himself is the one thing that is needed. Don’t abandon him to serve him! This is what Martha was doing by laboring in her own strength. In Jesus’ presence, there is no stress, no worry, no irritation at those who *are* lingering in Jesus’ presence instead of helping lighten Martha’s burden.

In Jesus’ presence we can be freed from these negative side effects, while actually getting more done with less work! Did Jesus have to work at a job for months to earn enough money to be able to afford to feed thousands? No, he was rich in *faith*. So he could spend his time ministering instead of earning money (providing needs through the strength of the flesh), and God supplied the need.

“And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19 (NIV))

In order to minister as effectively as Jesus, we need to exercise and grow our faith, that God Himself will step in and supply. We don’t have to rely on our own strength to make sure the physical (et cetera) needs of people are taken care of.

This is the secret to effective ministry: Relying on God to meet our needs, and those to whom we minister. We are not responsible, nor adequate to try to fill the needs ourselves. And we need not neglect our own spiritual growth or thwart the growth of others to fill needs either.

As long as we, like Mary, put being close to and listening to Jesus as our top priority, he will direct us in what to do (as he directed his disciples when

feeding the thousands). And we never need leave his abiding presence, while accomplishing miracles to bless and provide for others, and be blessed and provided for ourselves.

We must obey the call of Jesus, not the call of Martha, who is the voice of guilt, duty and fleshly struggle. If we just follow Jesus, hanging on his every word, and obeying *his* direction, then, like He did for the Israelites in the desert, Elijah during the famine, and Jesus in the wilderness, God will provide.

- God's provision for His people Israel in the desert: *Psalm 78:12-32*
- God's provision for His servant Elijah during the famine: *1 Kings 17*
- God's provision for His son, our example, Jesus during his 40 days in the wilderness: *Mark 1:11-13*
- More scriptures on God's miraculous provision: *Gen 22; Gen 45; Matt 17:27; John 21:4-11*