

**THE GOAL OF THE GOSPEL:
JESUS DESIRES FOR EACH BELIEVER TO BECOME A MARY OF BETHANY**

*An Excerpt from a Devotional Commentary on the Song of Solomon
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"Never forget this Lady!" a lady who only spoke twelve words in the New Testament! Who is this very important, mysterious lady? It's Mary of Bethany. Every time she appears in the Word of God she is at Jesus' feet. First, she listened to His WORD; second, she witnessed in her WOE; third, she quietly poured out WORSHIP on Him. How important is she? So important that Jesus instructed us to speak about her wherever the gospel is preached! Jesus clearly declared it in Mark 14:9, "Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." What makes Mary of Bethany so special, so significant to the Lord that He insists she must be mentioned wherever His Gospel is preached? She is extremely important in learning what the truly consecrated, surrendered Christian life is all about! Do you really want to know what will please the Lord? Learn from this lady!

PRAY WITH ME: "Dear Abba Father, cause my spiritual eyes to observe the actions of this precious lady's heart. May her desires be my desires. May my heart please You as much as her heart did so many years ago. *'Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law'* (Your Word - Psalm 119:18), in Jesus precious name, amen!"

I. SITTING AT JESUS' FEET TO HEAR HIS WORD

Please read **Luke 10:38-42**. Martha desires to do something very good. She invites Jesus into her home to make Him a meal. Martha wants Jesus to feel special. However, it would be on her own terms. Nothing was to get in the way of her plans, not even Jesus! Martha represents the busy Christian, always doing and seldom pausing just to sit quietly, with undivided attention, listening to the Lord speak through His Word to the heart. Mary had been helping but chose to sit at Jesus' feet and listen to Him. To be a Mary of Bethany is a choice. Under enormous emotional pressure, Mary chose between her sister and Jesus. She had counted the cost (**Luke 14:26-28**). She took advantage of the moment! Mary is teaching us that it is necessary to drop all activities and sit at Jesus' feet and have our spirit fed, comforted and strengthened by His Word. By stopping all activities Mary was saying, "Lord, You and Your Word are much more important than my activities."

Martha had an inflexible agenda. There would be a meal and it would be served when she planned it to be served. Why didn't Martha ask Jesus if He wanted to eat at that moment? What began as a heartfelt, loving act turned into an emotional nightmare for the whole household! Martha became distracted on the task itself. In **Luke 10:40** the Greek word for "distracted" carries with it the idea of being drawn in different directions; going around in circles! This verb is passive, meaning that she is controlled by the circumstances.

Satan approaches Martha in the kitchen and whispers to her, "Look at all you have to do and nobody cares!" In verse 40 of the text, the Greek word "left" is a strong word meaning "to abandon; to utterly forsake"! Evil seeds of irritation are planted in Martha's heart which turn into anger. Infuriated and outraged, a root of bitterness is implanted in her heart (**Heb.12:15**) and would attempt to defile the very act of service meant to bless. Martha waits impatiently for Mary to come and help her. You can hear Martha thinking, "She hates me, look at her there sitting with Jesus as if I don't exist!" Mary was fulfilling a requirement of a true disciple of Jesus, to be so in love with Him that it looks as if she hates her sister (**Luke 14:26**).

Having had enough of Mary's seeming lack of concern, Martha bursts in on them in anger, questions whether Jesus cares for her, scolds Mary to Jesus and commands Him to do something about it. Wuest's translation gives us a true picture of Martha's demeanor in approaching Jesus. "And bursting upon Jesus she assumed a stance over Him and said...." She is so aggravated that she cannot speak to Mary directly. Martha had welcomed Jesus into the heart of her home but not into the heart of her activities. So many welcome Jesus into their soul for salvation but few welcome Jesus into the circumstances of their life.

Through Martha, Satan is attempting to rob Mary of receiving precious truth from her Lord and robbing Jesus of the joy or her fellowship. Martha allowed the enemy to bring in a tense, angry, negative, hatefully charged atmosphere into the home. The word "troubled" or "bothered" used by the Lord is another very strong Greek word meaning, to: "disturb; throw into a tumult; set in an uproar; make a noise or disturbance, especially the noise made in lamenting the dead."

What can we learn from Mary? She sits quietly and does not respond. There was no angry reaction from her! She was completely focused on her Lord. Mary allowed Jesus to take care of this very volatile situation. Jesus said that, ***"...Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."*** What Mary received at Jesus' feet (**Luke 10**) will give her strength when her brother tragically dies in (**John 11**). When death comes to Lazarus, Martha will be crushed but Mary will be comforted.

Martha was into service alone. Mary was into the Lord Himself. Mary's heart is summed up in these words, ***"The Lord is my portion, saith my soul...."*** (**Lam.3:24**). Sacrificing time for Jesus alone opens to us precious revelation from God's Word. Precious to His heart is this very real act of love!

What was it that Mary had which would not be taken away? It was her absolute confidence in the Lord, her love for Jesus, faith in Him, and the emotional and spiritual strength that would remain in her heart when the family tragedy would strike. Mary had no idea that her brother would die in the not too distant future. When Lazarus died Martha would have none of those qualities. Mary will handle it in total faith and trust. Martha will lose her peace and will let fly an accusing attitude to the Lord in **John 11**. Do you want to please the Lord? Be a Mary of Bethany by sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to His Word.

II. FALLING DOWN AT JESUS' FEET IN YOUR WOE

Please read [John 11:1-45](#). The word comes to Jesus that His very close friend Lazarus is deathly ill. So important is Mary that the Holy Spirit mentions what she will be doing in [John 12:1-3](#) before it actually takes place in the narrative ([11:2](#)). The Lord sends a message back to Mary and Martha giving them the distinct feeling that their brother would not die. The emotional shockwave hits them. Each hour he grows worse. "Jesus will get here in time" they whisper to their dying brother. Then Lazarus dies! And Jesus is still outside the town making no move to help! Martha thinks that Jesus really didn't care about His friend. Instead of rushing to Lazarus' side, which was expected, the Lord waits two more days and then shows up.

Martha runs out in anger, and with an accusing tone says, "Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died." She tells Jesus she knew that when He prays the Father answers Him. But implied in that statement is, "but You didn't pray for my brother did You!" ([John 11:21,22](#))

Then Martha returns secretly to Mary, she calls Him "master" or "teacher". Notice carefully that she calls Jesus, "Lord" to His face but now it is only "teacher". So many of us sing songs and hymns on Sunday about Jesus being Lord, but when the circumstances of life turn sour, our heart is exposed and we find out that He really is not our Lord at all ([Rom.14:9](#)). He just taught us some nice Christian thoughts that have no real power in our lives.

In the deep trial of life, Martha had nothing. Why? She was so busy "serving" Jesus that she had no time to receive from Him! What Mary had received in Luke 10 was still there when the tragedy struck! She did not turn on the Lord. So many of us, deep in our heart, blame the Lord for not stepping in and turning things around when everything goes wrong. When the dark clouds of life sweep over our souls there is nothing to lean upon to carry us through. Having had no intimate time with Him, they fail to put into practice the promises in [I Cor.10:13](#) and [II Cor.4:7-9](#).

So important is Mary's heart that the Holy Spirit, while talking about Martha, interrupts the train of thought and directs our focus to Mary. He wants us to see her sitting still in the house while Martha was acting in haste ([John 11:20](#)). Mary had formed a spiritual habit when all was going well and now she would apply it to the deep valley of her soul. Mary was doing what Jesus had taught in [Luke 21:19](#), "In your patience possess ye your souls." Her emotions were under control. Her actions fulfill [Psalm 37:4-5](#), "***Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.***"

What Mary learned at Jesus' feet in [Luke 10](#) would be enough to get her through this ordeal of death and still love Jesus. The moment finally comes when Jesus calls for Mary. Only when Jesus gives the OK does she move, quickly and without a word. Do you wait for the Lord or do you rush out in the flesh to solve every problem? Those who were there to comfort her followed, not knowing where she was going. She kneels in front of the Lord.

Mary's body language speaks to all around and to the heart of the Lord. It was saying, "I don't understand why You didn't come but I still love You. I know You could have healed him but that didn't happen. I will not blame You. I have faith in You even though I am confused. I truly am submitted and committed to You with all of my heart." The Holy Spirit makes note of all those weeping there. But Martha is not mentioned. At that moment I believe she was too angry to cry!

In Luke 10 Mary surrendered her heart to hear His Word. Here, she is at Jesus' feet witnessing. Later, she is given the credit for having won the group to the Lord. The Holy Spirit says, "***Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him (John 11:45).***" He specifically singled her out. The Holy Spirit could have said, "those who had attended Lazarus' funeral" or "those who were with Martha and Mary." But He didn't! A surrendered Mary, consumed with Jesus, was used to lead the others to the Lord. She had surrendered to Him in her woe.

III. KNEELING AT JESUS' FEET TO WORSHIP

We now come to the most precious moment in Mary of Bethany's life. Read **John 12:1-6** and **Mark 14:3-9**. Mary is at Jesus' feet but now it is for worship. Here again was a choice made by her. Of all those there, she alone proved to be a real, true disciple by giving up her best (perfume) in worship (**Luke 14:33**).

Mary had saved the perfume for anointing His body, revealing that Jesus was on her heart and mind way before this act of worship. Had Jesus revealed to her, while sitting at His feet in **Luke 10**, that very soon He was going to die but would rise from the dead in three days? Here in **John 12**, she gave that which cost her something (sacrifice of time, energy, thought, substance - see **II Sam.24:24**). What love! What devotion! What humbleness! That's worship!

She anoints Jesus' head and feet with a very, very costly perfume. Her heart was saying, "I am submitted to Your thoughts (head) and I am submitted to Your ways and authority (feet)." Notice that Mary breaks it. It cannot be retrieved! She didn't save any of it! It was all for Him. The value could be at least \$12,000 in today's money (Matt. 20:2 - a pence is a day's wage, in our day it would be - 300x \$5.00 x 8). Here she is consumed in worship for Jesus. She is giving the Lord what He desires most (**John 4:23,24**). The fragrance permeates the house. As you break over His feet what is most valuable to you, your will, the fragrant, spiritual aroma of this living sacrifice will fill the place where you are and then follow you wherever you go that day!

What a blessing! Mary carried Jesus' fragrance with her all that day and so with us, when we surrender to Him. Then she is attacked by Judas with a biblical principle - the feeding of the poor. He says, "What a waste Mary! Many could truly be helped who are in need. Look at you. You don't care about those who are perishing because of hunger." Judas wants all the attention placed on the poor. Mary directs all the attention onto Jesus! The disciples picked up on Judas' "righteous" thought and actually began to scold her. Today, we would say, "Aren't there young girls in your neighborhood who would love to have just a little of that

costly perfume? You then could witness to these girls and lead them to Christ." Why didn't the disciples notice that Jesus was not upset about the costly perfume being poured out on Him?

The disciples were angry with her for wasting the costly perfume. However, Mary is so focused on Jesus that she does not retaliate against them with angry words. As with the situation with Martha, Mary simply looks to Jesus to solve the problem. Mary was totally surrendered and dependent on Jesus in every circumstance. That is exactly what He wants you to do. Surrender all to Him, all the rights to your life.

Can you imagine what this extravagant gift must have meant to Jesus as He was about to be unfairly tried, scourged and crucified? Within two days He would be taken from the Garden of Gethsemane and crucified. That powerful fragrance from the anointing on His head would still remain. As the false accusations were hurled at Him, and the whip of evil came crashing down on His back, and the hellish nails pierced His hands and feet, the sweet aroma of that precious fragrance still on His head spoke volumes to His heart - "There are those who deeply love Me! There will be others down through the ages who will love Me with the fragrance of their sacrificed wills to Me!" In the midst of the excruciating pain in His spirit, soul and body - love and joy were in the air! ***"...who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame...." (Heb. 12:2).***

MARY WALKED IN HOLINESS (separated to Jesus)! THE RESULT WAS A LIFE FILLED WITH THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.

1. **LOVE** – In every aspect of Mary's life Jesus was always the reason for living. Her heart was completely captivated by Jesus.
2. **JOY** - She knew how to spiritually humble herself and thus, she was highly exalted by Jesus resulting in unspeakable joy.
3. **FAITHFULNESS** - Mary counted the cost (being criticized, etc.) and always chose Him above everything and everyone else.
4. **PATIENCE** - She never lost Her faith and trust in the Lord even during one of life's severest trials - death of a dear family member.
5. **KINDNESS** - Mary sought to worship Jesus with her precious gift of kindness and Jesus made sure she would be remembered!
6. **GOODNESS** - She was filled with Jesus and His word and the goodness of her spirit is still ministering today 2000 years later!
7. **PEACE** - With the eyes of her heart focused on Jesus, Mary was not emotionally rattled by difficult circumstances.

8. **GENTLENESS** – In all circumstances Mary’s body language witnesses to us clearly about her beautiful gentleness.

9. **SELF-CONTROL** - Although her character and motives were severely questioned, she remained silent and did not retaliate.

THE SACRIFICE OF SUFFERING IN SILENCE

Mary of Bethany suffered the pain of silence in not reacting to her sister’s outburst of anger and the disciples scolding her in front of Jesus. It would have been so easy and seemingly so right but she didn’t. Jesus suffered in silence, so at times He calls on us to do the same and wait for Him to work. ***Isa 53:7 “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.”*** (see ***1 Pet. 2:23; Matt. 27:12,14***). Have you been wronged, yet God is asking you to remain silent and wait? Pray ***Psa. 62:5 (NKJV) “My soul, wait silently for God alone, For my expectation is from Him.”***

WHAT ABOUT YOU DEAR CHRISTIAN? Mary of Bethany surrendered every circumstance to her Lord whom she loved with all of her heart. Right now, why don't you do the same? Pray this prayer, "Dear Abba Father, It is no longer my will but Your will that I desire in my life. I surrender every person and every circumstance to You, now and for the rest of my life. I will totally depend upon You. In Your precious name Lord Jesus, amen!" ***(Romans 12:1-2; Phil.1:6).***

MARY'S HEART IS SUMMARIZED IN THE SPIRITUAL SONG "AT YOUR FEET":

At Your feet, praising You,
At Your feet, loving You,
At Your feet, hearing You,
At Your feet, at Your feet,
anointing You!

Take my heart, at Your feet,
Take my tears, at Your feet,
Take my will, at Your feet,
At Your feet, at Your feet,
breaking me!

Sanctified! set apart,
Sacrificed! was Your part,
Satisfied! is my heart,
At Your feet, at Your feet,
adoring You!