

Two Disciples

Luke 10:38-42 contains the account of two relatively obscure disciples. These two disciples were sisters, and are two of the more well-known women in the Bible. I am speaking of Martha, and her younger sister, Mary. In 8:1-3, Luke mentioned several women who traveled with Jesus and the disciples and contributed to their support. Now he tells about a woman who entered into discipleship. Once again Luke portrays the way Jesus transcended the prejudices of his day. In the passage under consideration, Jesus was traveling and came to the familiar village of Bethany, about two miles from Jerusalem, the home of Mary and Martha. Mary and Martha were sisters to Lazarus who Jesus would raise from the dead later in John 11. This article is going to briefly discuss four characteristics of these disciples.

First, we need to notice that they were female. In the times of the Bible, it was a man's world. Nevertheless, Mary sat at Jesus feet and heard His word. Kent Hughes wrote, "Judaism did not forbid women to be instructed in the Torah, but it was unheard of for a rabbi to allow a woman to sit at his feet. Later rabbinic tradition includes quotations such as: 'May the words of the Torah be burned, they should not be handed over to women.'" Clearly, Jesus rejected such ideals. Women such as Dorcas and Aquila make quite a big impression in the New Testament. Ladies have much right and responsibility to be good disciples of God as men.

Second, they were faithful. Martha in this story was certainly not right in her attitude toward her sister, or even toward the Lord. But let us not forget that Martha was committed to the task at hand, serving the Lord, and was indeed faithful to the Lord Himself. While Martha was faithful with details of hospitality, Mary had a better handle on the more important task at hand (Luke 10:38). The life of the Lord would end soon, and Mary used her time to listen to Him and feast upon every word.

Third, there was friction. Sometimes when we try to do too much, it is easy for us to look at others who are not helping and get frustrated. Martha did this and Jesus tenderly, yet firmly, corrected Martha by saying, "*Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful ...*" Although it is important for everything in the home to be nice and presentable for guests, really only one decision was necessary, and Mary had chosen the good part to listen to Him. Jesus would not be alive very long and the valuable time was to be spent with Him.

Fourth, there was favor. Mary received the compliment from Jesus that she had made the right choice. We are left in this account thinking less of Mar-

tha, but a little later, when Lazarus was raised from the dead, Martha made one of the greatest statements of faith in Jesus Christ (John 11:25-27). To this day, Martha stands in scripture as a disciple who knew her Master. So Mary and Martha both knew what to do in proper worship to the Lord. Because of this, they both found favor with Jesus.

The preceding narrative about Jesus choosing the 70 and the parable of the good Samaritan establish the importance of priorities in the Christian life; i.e., heeding the commands to love God and one's neighbor. Martha would learn to give the Lord and His word priority even over loving service. There are important human needs, whether of the victim in vss. 30-35 or of Jesus Himself. But what is most "needed" goes beyond even these. Choose the "good" part!

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