



From His Hands
MINISTRIES

The Women in Christ's Life: Martha ... Mary's Sister
by Kris Swiatocho

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article is part of the The Women in Christ's Life series.

My mother is only one example of a woman who has impacted my life as a result of her relationship with Christ. Throughout this series, I want to share with you about some of the other women who have impacted my life solely because of their relationship with Jesus. I believe as I share that you, too, will connect with them and discover for yourself how God has always had a plan for you, is working it out in your life and will never leave you.

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. 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 10:38-43

So what is the big deal? What is wrong with wanting to make things nice? What is wrong with wanting to make a good meal, have a table set, and a clean house? These things don't happen by themselves. Someone has to do them. Why all the fuss? Can't I talk to Jesus later? Oh and by the way, I need some help in here!

I don't know about you but I struggle sometimes with having to choose to either sit at Jesus' feet or do His work. At the time, both seem to be just as important. Both seem to be good. Personally, for most of my life I have been a Martha. I have to work on it every day to spend time with God; everything becomes competition with sitting at Jesus' feet. Now I am not talking about choosing TV over God (although sometimes when I need to zone out and relax, it wins), or food (yes, this has won out many, many times ... you can look at my picture to see how many times) or shopping (thank God this hasn't been a struggle in a long time - if you don't have it, you can't spend it) or cutting my toenails (I am sure many people who see my feet while wearing sandals are thankful).

It's easy to choose God over those things. What I struggle with is choosing to sit at Jesus' feet when I believe with my whole heart that the thing I am doing is also as important and is a way of learning from God. A way of fulfilling my call as a Christian, as a woman. I struggle with allowing phone calls by people in need to stop me in my quiet time with God, or an urgent email from a church that is having ministry problems, or a family member who needs me to come now and help them out, or even writing this article.

I believe Martha struggled in the same way. Not that sitting at Jesus' feet isn't important, but following through with other commitments is also important. And when her sister didn't seem to feel the same way Martha did, she got upset. I can relate as I have struggled over and over with others who don't seem to care as much about the "work" of the Lord.

I know you know what I mean. Haven't you ever been on a church committee, and no one shows up? Or you have started a Bible study and everyone seems to always be late? But what Martha misses is that without sitting at Jesus' feet, then nothing else matters. It is the sitting at his feet and learning about him that gives us our direction. It gives us our priorities. It gives us our peace. I believe Mary will do her fair share of the work when it is needed. Not because Martha complains or fusses at her, but because she will get her purpose and direction by God first which will lead to what work she needs to do. Wouldn't you want the people who serve with you or under you to do so with direction by God? People with direction commit. People with direction follow-through. People with direction are faithful.



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I have heard many sermons and Bible studies on Martha. Martha is painted into being this controlling, complaining, workaholic, obsessed sister who isn't interested in listening to Jesus. And Mary is described as the only one who got it. Personally, I believe Martha did love Jesus and did value his presence, but due to her life situation felt necessary to take care of her home first. She simply was doing what was good versus what was best. I love Martha because I see some of myself in her. Did she make the wrong choice to not just sit at Jesus' feet? Perhaps, but I believe it wasn't out of being a control freak but out of responsibility. I believe as she would grow in the Lord, she would learn that it was OK to leave things to sit at Jesus' feet. This is what being a disciple of Christ is all about - learning to sit at his feet each day.

What I Have Learned From Martha:

1. Doing good is not enough, we must do what is best.

Jesus told Martha that she worries about many things, but that Mary had chosen what was better and that it could not be taken from her. God must come first in all things. We must be willing to sit at his feet each day to get direction so that we know what is best versus what is just good. And when we sit at his feet, what we learn can not be taken from us.

"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 10:41-42

2. Even in the midst of doing God's work, life can distract us to the point of affecting our relationship with God. The Enemy's goal is to distract us, to steal, kill and destroy us. He will use whatever he can from something simple to something extreme. With Martha he distracted her with things she handled each day. Things that she was used to doing. Distractions can easily pile up to the point that we aren't able to hear God, much less know his peace and direction for our lives.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

— John 10:10

3. What seems right to me, may not be.

Martha expected Jesus to do what she wanted. She felt that her sister was getting out of her responsibility of getting dinner ready. She confidently expected Jesus to agree with her. Almost in such a way as if Jesus was her parent and was settling a dispute. She even tries to manipulate and control Jesus by asking him if he cares that she is having to do all the work. We can't assume that even though we may passionately believe in what we want or do, that it is the best. I feel confident about my stand regarding my family. I have felt in the past that my brothers should feel just as I do regarding our grandmother who was in a nursing home. However, as I began to pray about things and giving it to God, I slowly began to realize that they saw the situation differently. That my opinion and the desire to control the situation may not be the best way. That perhaps they had a better idea of how to handle things.

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

— Romans 8:5-7

4. You can be friends with Jesus ... a man and a Savior.

Martha taught me that she was Jesus' friend. She welcomed him into her home, fed him and felt comfortable asking for him to tell her sister to help her. You wouldn't do this with a stranger. Sometimes I think we forget that Jesus wants to be our friend, too. He wants us to talk with him about all the things in our lives - from where to find a good parking spot



to how to witness to being thankful to our cry for help. He wants our relationship to be real. Just start talking to him today.

I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

— John 15:15

5. Jesus has compassion for us.

In Jesus' response to Martha's request to have Mary help her, he says her name twice. It is like when we council or talk to a friend and we are trying to calm them down. We may first say their name to get their attention and then again to have them listen to what we are saying. Jesus loved Martha as he loves us. Sometimes he says "Kris, Kris, you are missing what I want to tell you. Kris, Kris, you are not getting it. Kris, Kris, I want so much more for you than you would ever know." I know Jesus loves me and has compassion for me where I am as I work toward being like Him.

The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love.

— Psalm 145:8

6. It's important to give what we have away.

Martha and her sister opened up their home to Jesus and His disciples. It's important to remember that all we have belongs to God. God allows us to use it. That when we tithe we are not giving 10 percent, but getting to keep 90 percent. Martha was willing to give what she had away. Are there those in your life whom God has asked you to help, to feed, to shelter, to love but because of pride you won't do it? As we give, God will bless us in more ways than we could ever count.

The best of all the firstfruits and of all your special gifts will belong to the priests. You are to give them the first portion of your ground meal so that a blessing may rest on your household.

— Ezekiel 44:30

7. Jesus loves and cares for women.

At the time of Christ, women had no authority or power. But Jesus not only ate with them and was in their home, but also encouraged them to sit at His feet to learn. This proves of his provision for women. He not only acknowledges our value, but encourages us to learn so that we would grow in our relationship with him. Thank you, Martha, for stepping out and being an example to all women.

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. 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 10:38-42

As God sows the Word in our hearts, it cannot be taken from us. We will need to know God's Word so as life comes, we will be ready to speak God's Word over it. We need the time before God to hear him, experience him and learn from him. I know there are many important things on your list that need to be done each day. Believe me, my list never seems to get completely finished.

Recently I heard speaker and author Beth Moore say, "that even after we are gone God will continue working on our list. He wants us before him at his feet first. Even if by doing this some of our list doesn't get done ... that is OK. He can get it done. He's God." Trust God today to get your list done with the right priorities and the right attitude. Oh, and remember to sit at His feet.



Kris Swiatocho is the President and Director of TheSinglesNetwork.org Ministries and FromHisHands.com Ministries. Kris has served in ministry in various capacities for the last 20 years. An accomplished trainer and mentor, Kris has a heart to reach and grow leaders so they will in turn reach and grow others. She is currently working on her third Bible study, *From the Manger to the Cross: The Men in Jesus' Life*. Her second Bible study, *From the Manger to the Cross: The Women in Jesus' Life*, was published last fall and is available on her websites. Her first book, *Singles and Relationships: A 31-Day Experiment*, was co-authored with Dick Purnell of Single Life Resources.

TheSinglesNetwork.org Ministries helps churches, pastors and single adult leaders evaluate, develop and support their single adult ministries through high-energy speaking engagements, results-oriented consulting and training and leadership development conferences and seminars. Click here to request a FREE "How to Start a Single Adult Ministry" guide.

FromHisHands.com Ministries is Kris's speaking ministry. If you've ever heard her speak, you know that Kris is the kind of speaker who keeps the crowd captivated, shares great information and motivates people to make a difference in the lives of those around them! She speaks to all church audiences on everything from "first impression" ministry to women's topics to singles and young adults. She can speak on a Sunday morning, at a woman's retreat or for a single adults conference. Bring Kris to your church today!

Singles and Relationships by Kris Swiatocho and Dick Purnell

Many singles are Christians who wonder if God will ever bring a mate their way or if they should just stop focusing on a future with a marriage partner and live the single life to the fullest. Kris Swiatocho and Dick Purnell offer solid biblical answers for singles in this newest title in Dick's popular 31-Day Experiment Bible study.



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