

## Jesus Guides

### *Be a woman who is sensitive to the Spirit*

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August 2005

Now our focus turns to Martha's sister, Mary. The key to Mary's story is found in John 12:8 where Jesus says to a disciple, "For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me." Why is this statement important in the life of Mary? Because Mary was sensitive to the Holy Spirit and so she knew that Jesus' time on earth was short. This realization guided her actions.

Let's look at the story of Mary beginning with Luke 10:38-42, the same place we began with Martha:

Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word. 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." But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Notice that Mary is seated at Jesus' feet *listening* to Him. She, I think, is not a multi-tasker like her sister Martha, so she needed to be close to and totally focused on Jesus. As we look at Mary we will find that she is quiet, sensitive, meditative and worshipful, and Jesus declares that she has "chosen the good part." She has sought the "one thing" mentioned in Psalm 27:4:

One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek:  
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,  
To behold the beauty of the LORD  
And to meditate in His temple.

Mary sat at the feet of Jesus and soaked up all she could from Him. She beheld His beauty; she meditated in His temple. Mary's choice to receive all she could from Jesus resulted in her being sensitive to spiritual things, as we will see as we continue to look at her story.

In John 11 we find the remarkable account of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. Equally compelling is the dialogue between Jesus and Martha and Jesus and Mary. In our previous discussion of Martha we looked at her interaction with Jesus. Let's now look at what happens between Jesus and Mary as told in verses 28 through 44:

When she had said this, she went away and called Mary her sister, saying secretly, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." And when she heard it, she got up quickly and was coming to Him.

Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met Him. Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and consoling her, when they saw that Mary got up quickly and went out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled, and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept. So the Jews were saying, "See how He loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?"

So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. "I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me." When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

First take note of the servant-hearted Martha who helps Mary by telling her that Jesus has arrived and wants to see her. The sensitive Mary has stayed in the house to grieve for her brother, but then Martha lets her know that Jesus wants to see her. When she hears this Mary gets up quickly and goes to Him, and as soon as she sees Jesus she falls at His feet. Mary takes the position of humility and worship before Jesus, but the overwhelming heaviness of grief puts her there as well. She weeps and says to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."

Jesus sees and feels Mary's grief, and even though He knows that He is going to raise Lazarus from the dead, He still acknowledges and feels the pain Lazarus' sisters have gone through.

In reading through the whole account in John 11 you will note that both Mary and Martha say the same thing: "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." Both of them believed that Jesus could have prevented Lazarus from dying, but neither had dared to consider that He could raise him from the dead, especially since Lazarus had already been dead four days!

It's interesting that when Jesus asks for the stone to be removed from the entrance of the tomb Martha objects, but apparently there is no objection from Mary. Was she beginning to hope for a miracle?

We see that Jesus does not question Mary in her beliefs as He had Martha. Mary had sought the good part and found it; she had already shown Jesus that she fully believed He

was the Son of God and that in Him was eternal life. But what Jesus would teach both Mary and Martha is to believe that with God all things are possible.

“Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”

And Lazarus came forth at Jesus’ command.

Wow. What an amazing reunion that must have been!

We see another reunion of Jesus with Lazarus, Martha and Mary in John 12:1-8:

Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?" Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. Therefore Jesus said, "Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me."

The scene is in Bethany and it is six days before the Passover. The time is drawing near for Jesus to be arrested and crucified. Martha is serving (no complaining this time) and Mary comes to Jesus with a very expensive vial of perfume. She pours it on His feet and also wipes His feet with her hair.

*Again* Mary is at the feet of Jesus in an attitude of worship and love. The vial of perfume represents quite an offering by Mary, probably worth a year’s wages. The house is filled with the fragrance which becomes a sweet-smelling offering to her Lord. Mary’s actions reflect some of the customs of preparing the body for burial. Why would she do this? Somehow she knew that Jesus’ time on earth was short.

Judas Iscariot then criticizes what Mary is doing, but Jesus says in response to him, “Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. “For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me.”

It is apparent that Mary is sensitive to spiritual things whereas Judas is ignorant of them. Mary senses in her spirit that the time is short and so she seizes the opportunity to anoint Jesus as an act of love. Jesus also points out that she is preparing Him for the soon-coming day when He will become the sacrifice to redeem mankind.

How can we be more sensitive to spiritual things as Mary was?

- By spending time at the feet of Jesus as Mary did—listening to Him, worshipping Him, loving Him.

- By hiding the Word of God in our heart—to memorize the Word makes it more readily available to our minds when we need it for encouragement, instruction, and direction.
- By praying from Ephesians 1 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ the Father of glory may give to us a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. Also pray that the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened so that we will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.
- By being guided by the Holy Spirit—But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose it to you.” John 16:13

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### Questions for you to ponder:

1. We have seen two instances where women anoint Jesus with perfume—the woman of ill-repute and Mary. What is the motivation behind each of these acts?
2. Read Psalm 119: 9-16, 89-104. How can memorizing and meditating on the Word of God help you?
3. Memorize Psalm 150 and recite it to a family member or friend. How can you incorporate worship of God into your daily life?
4. Read John 14:16-20, 25-27 and John 16:13-15. Who is the Holy Spirit? John 16:13 says of the Holy Spirit, “He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak.” What does this mean?
5. Mary spent a lot of time at Jesus’ feet, and as a result she was very sensitive to spiritual things. How can you spend more time at Jesus’ feet so that your sensitivity will grow?