

# Face to Face

*with*

*Martha and Mary*

Today we begin a journey through the pages of the Old and New Testaments where we will look into the lives of many of the women found there. In the process of your study this year, you will be personally challenged to look at each woman *face to face*, considering her strengths and her weaknesses, her trials and her triumphs, making personal application along the way.

This will be a year of discovery! You will not only uncover new and interesting things about the characters we will be studying, but you will discover many new things about yourself. Keep that word *discovery* in mind, because the lessons are written in such a way that the discovery process will be yours alone, as will the personal application in the end. If you feel that this study becomes somewhat confrontational – good! That is what it should be. Listen to what Paul has to say about this: *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work”* (II Timothy 3:16-17).

Now listen to this same verse in the NLT: *“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. It is God’s way of preparing us in every way, fully equipped for every good thing God wants us to do.”*

Isn’t that what it’s all about - our personal preparation by God to be and fulfill all that He has for us? As we move through these pages and these lives, we will find that this is His ultimate aim. And as we stand face to face with each of the women we will be studying, we will find ourselves face to face with Jesus.

*“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”* II Corinthians 3:18

Hallelujah and Amen!!!

## *First Day*

## *Her Story*

This week we are looking at two characters – Martha and her sister Mary. One of the remarkable things about these two is the fact that they are such opposites! That makes the study of their lives very interesting!

We will begin today by looking at what Scripture tells us about them. *This is their story.*

Read through each of these passages of Scripture and, in a few sentences, summarize the event that is described there:

**Luke 10:38-42** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**John 11:1-45** \_\_\_\_\_  
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Considering the fact that the John 11 account is the pivotal point in these sisters' lives, answer the following questions from that one event:

What was their *trial*? \_\_\_\_\_

- Note any contrasts in their response to the situation.
  
- Note any similarities in their reactions.

What was their *blessing*? \_\_\_\_\_

What did they *learn*? \_\_\_\_\_

## Second Day

## Her Manner

### Who is She?

*Martha's name means "Lady."*

*Mary's name means "Bitterness."*

Today we will be looking at the character of Mary and Martha. As this year of Bible study is really a character study, we want to carefully look at these two women from this point of view. Each of us has a personality. A *personality* is something we are born with. It is not necessarily either good or bad – it simply is – and it is not something that we can even really change! But *character* is something different - we each have the opportunity to develop character. II Peter 1:5-7 presents this well: “...*Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.*” These are the building blocks of character. The result is presented this way: “*For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (II Peter 1:8).

From the **Luke 10** and **John 11** passages, use the following words to describe Martha:

- *Her strength*
  
- *Her weakness*
  
- *Her generosity*
  
- *Her faith*

Do you know anyone like Martha? Share the things you like about her. Is there anything you don't like? \_\_\_\_\_

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What difference do you think Martha's *character* made in the way she handled Lazarus' death? \_\_\_\_\_

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Use the following words to describe Mary:

- *Her strength*
  
- *Her weakness*
  
- *Her love*
  
- *Her courage*

Do you know anyone like Mary? Share the things you like about her. Is there anything you don't like? \_\_\_\_\_

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What difference do you think Mary's *character* made in the way she handled Lazarus' death? \_\_\_\_\_

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Who are you most like – Martha or Mary? Remember – though they were both very different – they were both children and servants of Jesus, beloved of Him! Share your thoughts on this. \_\_\_\_\_

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## *Third Day*

## *Her Hope*

So far we have looked at both the character and circumstances of Martha and Mary. Today we will concentrate on how God enters in. Oswald Chambers has a saying, “*Don’t calculate without God.*” If we only had a Mary and a Martha and the death of a dear brother, we would have another tragic story that is multiplied out day after day and year after year right where we live. But the most important factor of any situation is not the situation itself, or the people involved – it is whether or not they bring God into it. God is the greatest factor in any equation – and if we calculate *without* Him, then we are left to our own devices – limited as they are. But if we calculate *with* Him, then we have opened up all possibility and we can have hope. Listen again to the wisdom of Oswald Chambers, “*If it is an impossibility, it is the thing we have to ask. If it is not an impossible thing, it is not a real disturbance. God will do the absolutely impossible.*”

In this section of our lesson each week we will be considering the *promises of God*. The Bible is literally *full* of promises. Have you realized this yet? If you haven’t, then you will this year. We will take our memory verse from this day of the lesson each week, so that by the end of the year you will have a notebook full of promises that you can draw upon in times of need. From time to time you will also be asked to look into the Word with the expectancy of finding new ones for yourself. So begin right now in your everyday Bible reading to be on the lookout for the promises of the Father to His beloved child – *you!*

Go back over the **John 11:1-45** passage and, using either Martha or Mary as your example, answer these questions:

What was her *need*? \_\_\_\_\_

What was her *hope*? \_\_\_\_\_

What was His *promise*? \_\_\_\_\_

There are actually several promises in this passage. Martha was promised that her brother would rise again (verse 23). Mary and Martha were promised that if they believed they would see the glory of God (verse 40). But there was a promise in this passage that was more profound even than these two, and this promise was encased within the revelation of Jesus, “*I am the resurrection and the life...*” In it Mary and Martha were given a greater revelation of who Jesus was. That will always be the case when you go through a trial with your eyes on Jesus – as Mary and Martha did - He will reveal to you in a greater way than ever before just who He is.

### *Memory Verse:*

“*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die*” (John 11:25-26). Begin memorizing this verse today!

Martha had just stated that she believed there would be a resurrection (verse 24). What did this statement of Jesus add to her understanding of Him? How would His words have given Martha hope? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- What does this statement of Jesus mean to you personally? Is there an area in your life in which you need *new life*?

Following one of the greatest revelations of Himself given in Scripture, what question did Jesus ask Martha? (v.26b) \_\_\_\_\_

What was her answer? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

That is really always the question: ***Do you believe?*** And that is the question asked of us in every place of need: ***Do you believe?*** For every need there is a promise, but we must grab hold and exercise our muscles of faith and believe!

Look up Luke 1:45. What is the benefit to the woman who believes in the promises of God? \_\_\_\_\_  
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What does II Corinthians 1:20 say about the promises of God? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What warning are we given about unbelief in Matthew 13:58? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In your place of need today, *do you (or will you) believe?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The greatest message in the words of Jesus to Martha is really to the one who has not yet seen Him as her *life*. In John 14:6 Jesus says, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through Me.*” If you are starting this Bible study this year and have not yet asked Jesus to be *your* life, you can do so right now. Just pray this simple prayer in faith *believing* that He will respond to your request. Remember, the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ is just that - a gift. He wants to give it – will you take it? Pray this prayer: “*Dear Jesus, I need new life. Will you be my life? Your Word says that if I believe in You, I will have life – even if I die. I ask you today to give me eternal life. Please forgive me and cleanse me from my sins, and help me to live my life hereafter in gratefulness for my salvation. Teach me about Your ways and help me to live my life according to Your will. Thank you dear Lord. In Jesus name, Amen*”

## *Fourth Day*

## *Her Gifts*

In today's portion of the lesson we will be looking at the subject of *gifts*: what they are, the practical ways we use them, and God's purpose in giving them. We will sometimes look at the *spiritual gifts* mentioned in the books of the New Testament but also, in a broader sense, we will consider the *practical* talents and abilities that enhance our everyday life. James 1:17 tells us: "*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights...*" Whether spiritual or practical, every gift is from God, and we have the responsibility to find out what gifts we have been given and use them to the best of our ability – not to do so would not only keep us from reaching our full potential, but it would also deprive others of the contribution and blessing God wants us to be in their lives.

The role of women in Biblical times was much more clearly defined than it is today. Martha's or Mary's definition of "women's work" would not be dressing in a business suit with briefcase in hand, climbing the corporate ladder. They would not have investors buying shares in their company through the New York Stock Exchange, or magazine subscribers numbering in the millions. Women of their day would not have husbands who stay at home and wear the title of "Mr. Mom." Remember the commercial a few years ago that made the statement, "*You've come a long way baby*"? That statement certainly reveals a great deal of truth, but for the woman of today that truth is not always positive – in fact, sometimes it is very burdensome!

Women of Mary and Martha's day were kept busy from morning till evening with a wide array of activities that originated from and centered on the home. According to Luke's gospel, Martha is the one who opened her home to the Lord and His entourage, so it is Martha's duties and her gifts that draw our attention in today's study.

On any given day Martha would be found rising early to prepare the ingredients and make the baked goods for her household. Then she would probably shop for the fresh meat and groceries, and even possibly prepare the animal for slaughter that she would need for that day's meals. Not only did she sew the clothing for the members of her household, she had to be skilled at spinning and weaving the thread to make the cloth. Then of course there was the cleaning and laundry to oversee; and for the women who were mothers, there was homeschooling.

Whenever Jesus came to town Martha's house became ministry "headquarters." Just think about it – twenty-four hours a day people coming and going, bringing their needs to Jesus; and multiplied numbers at the table for each evening's meal. Such demands would require a lot on the part of the mistress of the house, and, surely on some days, would take a huge toll physically and emotionally.

- Identify one or two of Martha's gifts, talents or abilities and how she may have used them in serving God.

- Do you see any of Martha’s gifts operating in your life? If so, what and how are you using them?
- Why do you think God gave you those gifts?

Martha allowed the “busyness” of her gift to distract her from her quiet time with the Lord, and her stress level became unbearable.

- When your focus is on exercising your gifts, rather than on spending time with the *Giver*, what happens? Be specific.

We can easily relate to Martha. For some of us it’s as simple as looking in the mirror – we can see Martha staring back at us. For the next few minutes, would you carefully and thoughtfully consider the questions that follow and allow God to put His finger on those areas where you are a “Martha”? Let Him show you both the positive and the negative and where you can perhaps make some adjustments that will allow Him room to work in your life in a deeper way. (Please be honest as you record your personal comments.)

- Martha had a servant’s heart... Do you?
- Martha was a close follower of Jesus... Are you?
- Martha was free to be herself in His presence... Are you?
- Martha took her feelings of anger & frustration to Jesus... Do you?
- Martha allowed Jesus to correct her and, as a result, enlarge her faith... Do you?
- Martha allowed Jesus to reveal what the power of God can do in her life, making her usable to Him. Do you?

Psalm 139 says that even before you were formed in your mother’s womb God knew you. Verse 16 says: *“Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them.”* God appointed and fashioned each day of your life in such a way that you would know the fullness of His joy and the extent of His omnipotent power through a personal relationship with Him. He gave you everything that pertains to life and godliness; every gift you will ever need to enable you to live for Him and be used by Him.

- Close your study by meditating on **Ephesians 2:10**. Write down what you know of those good works He prepared for you before the foundation of the world.



## *Fifth Day*

## *Her Legacy*

*“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” (Romans 15:4)*

Yesterday, since we took a closer look at *Martha’s gifts*, today we’ll highlight *Mary’s legacy*. Please read **Matthew 26:6-13** and **Mark 14:3-9**.

A *legacy* is something that is bequeathed to others; something that remains over. It is left behind so that others may benefit from it. In Scripture we are allowed the opportunity to see and study the lives of many women, some that loved God, and some that did not. In each case they leave behind for us life lessons from which we can learn and greatly benefit. *“Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition (or instruction), on whom the ends of the ages have come” (I Corinthians 10:11).*

Keep in mind that while you are examining the legacy of the women in your lesson each week, you are leaving imprints of your own. The chapters of their lives are history now, but yours are still being written. How will you be remembered? How would you like to be remembered? What will you leave behind of benefit for others? These are some of the questions you will consider each week. Remember that what you do and say today will leave a pattern of behavior viewed by others tomorrow and in the years to come. There is truth to the saying: *Sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny.*

### *Taking a closer look..*

- What makes Mary memorable to you?
  
- According to **Luke 10:42**, what *better part* did Mary choose that Martha didn’t?
  
- Because Mary chose the *better part*, what would she have to pass on to someone else?

Mary’s devotion to Jesus was grounded in gratitude for the miracle He performed in raising her brother from the dead. Her breaking open the alabaster flask and pouring forth the ointment upon Jesus meant choosing to give Him the most costly gift she could give – it was worth an entire year’s wages! The response to her act of love from others in the room was criticism and indignation.

### *Taking a personal look...*

- Is your service for the Lord *grounded in gratitude* for what He has done for you?

- Have you ever done something really extravagant for Jesus as a heartfelt expression of your love for Him?
- Has your devotion for the Lord ever been met with criticism from others? How did that affect you?

Did you happen to notice Mary's response when she encountered opposition? Was she defensive or argumentative? No, she made no attempt to explain herself or justify her actions; in fact, she said nothing in return. It would seem as if the time spent at the feet of her Lord resulted in Mary having what every woman of God desires: *the ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit*.

- Look up **I Peter 3:3-4** and share what it says about this ornament and its value to God.
- If someone were to describe you, would they say that you have this ornament?

William Barclay says that the ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit is *the silent preaching of a lovely life*. How much more could we accomplish for the kingdom of God by visibly displaying this ornament and keeping our mouths closed? Silence sometimes speaks volumes – and is not only precious to God, others can also appreciate its beauty.

In the end, it is Jesus Himself who comes to Mary's defense by commending her in a way unlike any recorded in the pages of Scripture. He says of her: "*Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the whole world, what this woman did will also be spoken of as a memorial to her*" (Mark 14:9).

### *Passing it on...*

- Summarize in your own words what Mary's legacy is and the possible impact it has made on succeeding generations.
- What have you gleaned from this week's lesson that you will pass on to someone else?

## *Sixth Day*

## *Your Prayer*

Each day this week you have examined up close – face to face – a woman of the Bible: her *story and manner; her promise and hope; her gifts and legacy*. Throughout the process, as you learned about her, you also learned about yourself.

Now the focus shifts to *Your Prayer*. Each week during your group time you will have the opportunity to pray in agreement with the other ladies for the things you write down on this personalized page. Keep an updated account in the *Praise* list each week as God answers your petitions. Let's begin this year by coming boldly to His throne and learning to pray the **BIG PRAYER** with expectancy! The only prerequisite for such boldness is being *humble* and *real* in His presence.

*Prayer:* Write out your prayer for each of the following...

*I praise God for* (an aspect of His marvelous character) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*I confess to God* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*I thank God for* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*I ask God for* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Promise:* Write out this week's *promise* in the space provided...and learn this year to pray these promises from Scripture.

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*Praise:* If God has answered a prayer request for you this week or fulfilled a desire of your heart, please write it out and date it as a stone of remembrance.

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