



**Session 6**  
**Summer 2020**  
**Multiage**

# Mary and Martha

**LUKE 10:38-42**

## prepare



### **PRAYER**

*God, the day holds so much. May I find you throughout the day and remember you in all that I do. Amen.*

### **PURPOSE STATEMENT**

To compare Mary's and Martha's ways of honoring Jesus

### **STORY SUMMARY**

Jesus and the disciples entered a village, and Martha welcomed Jesus into her home. Martha busied herself as hostess. Her sister Mary sat near Jesus and listened to what he was saying. Martha asked Jesus to tell Mary to help with the work. Instead, Jesus explained that Mary was focused on what was truly important. He invited Martha to a life less filled with distractions. The way Mary had chosen would not be taken from her.

### **teaching tips for multiage**

We teach children to eat a balanced diet for physical health. A balance is needed in our spiritual life as well. Following God means we are first and above all to glorify God, but we are also asked to serve others. Today's session encourages children to find a balance between being available to God and being available to others.

Decide which Explore options to offer. During the Retell, children will make mobiles. Younger children may need extra help in constructing the chenille stem (pipe cleaner) hanger and tying the yarn. You may choose to make a few in advance so children can simply attach the paper circles. Check Supplies and To do throughout this session to see what needs to be prepared.

## Martha

Given the male-oriented culture of the first century CE, any mention of women in the story of Jesus and his disciples is a welcome change. The Gospels of Luke and John have stories that feature Martha, her sister Mary, and their brother Lazarus. These texts provide tantalizing glimpses into their relationships with Jesus and their roles among Jesus' followers.

### Devoted hostess

The Gospel of Luke includes an incident that occurred during one of Jesus' visits in their home (10:38–42). Martha functions as hostess, eager to meet the needs of their guest. In a first-century Jewish home, this would have included water and basin to wash feet, as well as water to quench thirst; these acts of hospitality were essential, especially after a hot day of travel, often on foot, on dusty roads. Hosts normally also served a meal. Guests anticipated that they would be welcomed into homes, where they would receive provisions for their comfort and well-being (cf. Jesus' instructions to the twelve and the seventy in Luke 9:1–6; 10:1–12).

It is this kind of hospitality that Martha is intent on extending to Jesus, and she dedicates her energies to do it well. Since women of her day typically provided services of hospitality for guests, Martha is understandably perplexed when her sister Mary shirks her domestic duties. When Martha complains to Jesus, he responds by critiquing her, not for being hospitable but for being overly burdened by the work. Jesus gently chides Martha for allowing herself to be sidetracked from other priorities, namely, contemplation, devotion, and learning.

### What we can say about Martha

What then can we say about Martha? She is outspoken and action oriented. She is not as contemplative as her sister. However, after the death of Lazarus, Martha articulates her faith in Jesus as Messiah before Mary does (John 11:27).



## Mary

Mary is also featured in Luke 10:38–42 as she sits at Jesus' feet to listen to his teaching. Luke records that Mary sits in silence at Jesus' feet listening to his teaching, while Martha is preoccupied with a myriad of hosting tasks. Mary assumes the posture of a learner (see Acts 22:3, where Paul describes himself as having learned the law "at the feet of Gamaliel"). When Mary situated herself at Jesus' feet as a learner, many would have viewed her as behaving inappropriately. Getting an education was a male prerogative. It is remarkable, therefore, that Jesus defends Mary's choice. He even commends Mary for choosing the better way, and he adds that this privilege will not be taken away from her.

### Learner and servant

In his extended narrative about how Jesus relates to Mary and her siblings, the evangelist John includes an anecdote that parallels Luke's story in significant ways (John 12:1–8). Here too Mary is at the feet of Jesus, not primarily to hear him teach but to perform the ritual act of anointing. Her sister Martha appears again as the one who prepares the meal, although in this story Jesus does not highlight Mary's devotion as being better than Martha's service. Both sisters are serving Jesus, one by waiting on her guest at the table, the other by anointing his feet.

Mary's ministry foreshadows Jesus' willingness to stoop down to wash his disciples' feet, whereby he gives them a model for loving service (John 13:1–20). Mary serves Jesus the way he will soon serve his disciples, and she does so in an extravagant act of loving devotion. Jesus portrays Mary as a true disciple.

### What we can say about Mary

What can we learn about Mary's personal story? Mary is contemplative, eager to learn, and ready to give of herself in extravagant generosity.

# gather

## supplies

- *Shine Songbook and CD* (or digital versions)
- *Annual Shine Songbooks*
- CD player
- Battery-operated or regular candle, matches

## resource pack

- Bible memory poster (Ephesians 3)

## media connections

- *Martha and Mary* painting by He Qi (Internet)
- “My Number One” by Hillsong Kids (YouTube)
- “Innovators Jesus Is Number 1 Official Music Video” by Dzago Chatsama (YouTube)
- *Matt’s Fantastic Electronic Compusonic* by Jeanne Gowen Dennis

## BUILD COMMUNITY

Groups are bound to include different personalities. These differences can strengthen relationships or they can cause conflict. Talk about what makes a personality: how a person behaves, how a person feels. People can be talkative, reserved, active, calm, adventurous, or careful. Invite children to share, if they wish, what personality traits they see in themselves. Talk about the importance of learning from each other and seeing from different points of view.

## WORSHIP TOGETHER

Light a candle and invite the children into a time of silence. Let the silence settle for about a minute, then pray about our desire to listen to Jesus’ words, as Mary did. Sing or listen to “More Than Words” (track 11, page 16).

## SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Jesus reminded Martha that making time for God is important. Taking time to pray during the day keeps us focused on God. Spend time memorizing the two short prayers below with the group.

**Good morning, God. Guide me through the day. I put my trust in you. Amen.**

**Good night, God. Thank you for all you’ve given me. I rest in your love. Amen.**

### teaching tip

Some electronic media connections can be shared with your group. Using tablets and other devices can make it easy to connect to online music, show a short video clip, or show a painting related to the Bible text of the day. Always check the website ahead of time before sharing something with your group.

### Bible memory

Read the new memory passage aloud to the children, explaining that “him” refers to God. “Accomplish abundantly” means to do more than we would expect to do. Read the passage again, this time as a group.

**Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.**  
—Ephesians 3:20–21

# experience

## SHARE THE STORY

Ask a child to find Luke in the Bible; use a bookmark for nonreaders. Then instruct the children to stand when they hear Martha's name in the story and to sit when they hear Mary's name. Practice this with the children before reading the story from page 224 in *Shine On*. When reading, change "my sister" in Martha's dialogue to "Mary."

## WONDER AND REFLECT

Reflect on the story together, pondering the following questions. Continue to sit when talking about Mary and stand when talking about Martha.

- Imagine yourself as Martha, getting everything ready for your guests.
- Imagine what it was like to sit at Jesus' feet.
- I wonder how Mary felt when Jesus said, "Mary has chosen what is better."
- I wonder if Martha went back to the work or sat at Jesus' feet.
- I wonder how we can sit and listen to Jesus.

## PEACE NOTES

Praising and worshiping keeps our relationship with God strong. Serving others is also part of following God's ways. It requires a balance. Allow time for children to visit the prayer place (see To do). First, review the "Ways to pray" poster from the resource pack. Then begin sending children to the prayer place, a few minutes per person, while the rest of the group makes greeting cards. Provide construction paper and drawing utensils. Invite children to make cards with words of love and encouragement for people in the congregation.

**For larger groups:** Carry the individual prayer time over into Explore activities if necessary.



## Mary and Martha

Luke 10:38–42  
*Shine On*, p. 224

## supplies

- Bible
- *Shine On: A Story Bible*
- Construction paper
- Crayons/markers/  
colored pencils

## resource pack

- "Ways to pray" poster

## to do

- Set up a prayer place, if one has not already been arranged. See page 89 of this guide.

# explore

## CREATE

Having an object to focus on can help quiet our minds so that we can listen to God. Invite children to make “reflection jars.” For each jar, mix about 1 T / 15 ml glitter glue with  $\frac{3}{4}$  C / 180 ml warm water. Add food coloring if desired. Using a whisk will help the glue dissolve in the water. Screw the lid on tight. Shake the jar, then watch the glitter swirl as it floats to the bottom.

### supplies

- 8 oz / 220 ml glass jars with lids
- Glitter glue in several colors
- Warm water
- Food coloring (optional)
- Whisk (optional)



## MOVE

As we follow Jesus, we are asked to worship God and serve others. Divide your group into two to three teams. Place a paper bag by each team. On the other side of the room, place sixteen to twenty blocks or LEGO® bricks in a pile opposite each team. The first person in each team moves to its block pile, picks up two, and then returns to place them in the team’s paper bag. Taking turns, continue until all the blocks are in the bag. Then the team empties the bag and works together to build a church. The first team to make a church with all the blocks wins.

### supplies

- Paper grocery bags
- Blocks or LEGO® bricks

### other ideas

- Play “Duck, duck, goose,” substituting Mary for the duck (the one who sits) and Martha for the goose (the one who runs around).
- Brainstorm a list of how to make God first every day.

## RETELL

Children can make mobiles that show Mary’s and Martha’s different ways of honoring Jesus. Follow the instructions and use copies of the cutouts from page 90 of this guide.

### supplies

- Mobile cutouts and instructions (from Additional resources)
- Yarn/string
- Chenille stems (pipe cleaners), two per child
- Scissors
- Crayons/markers/colored pencils
- Tape

## LEAFLET

Children can think about how they balance worshiping God and serving others with the activity on pages 2 and 3 of the Multiage leaflet. On page 4, they can see how they spend their day by filling out a pie chart. Guide younger children by comparing an hour to the length of a certain movie or TV show, or to the length of today’s session.

### supplies

- Multiage leaflets
- Scissors
- Glue/glue sticks
- Pencils
- Crayons/markers/colored pencils



# bless

## PRAY

Gather together in a circle. Ask two children to mark with stickers the categories on the “Faithful followers” poster from the resource pack that fit Martha and Mary (Martha—*New Testament, welcomed others, talked to Jesus*; Mary—*New Testament, welcomed others, talked to Jesus*). Then stand and pray the People’s prayer together from the “Ways to pray” poster from the resource pack.

**God, we come together to worship and learn about you.**  
*(Link elbows).*

**We praise you in our joys.**  
*(Stand on tiptoe.)*

**We support each other in our sorrows.** *(Bend knees.)*

**In your love we meet** *(step in),*  
**and in your love we part.**  
*(Step out.)*

**Be with us as we go.**  
*(Unlink elbows.)*

**Shine through us as we live.**  
*(Raise arms.)*

**Amen.** *(Lower arms.)*

## SEND

Send the children with these words adapted from Matthew 6:33:

**Focus on following God’s ways and being close to God. God will give you all that you need.**

Make sure to send leaflets home with the children.

## supplies

- Multiage leaflets
- Small stickers

## resource pack

- “Faithful followers” poster
- “Ways to pray” poster



## leader’s closing prayer

Find comfort in knowing that God isn’t concerned with perfection and being the best. God is more interested in our motivations. We cannot fail if we approach each task as a means to glorify God.

*God, I sit at your feet, ready to learn. May your lessons guide me as I commit my work to you. Amen.*

*When singing, children will really follow the teacher’s lead. If the teacher gets into the song (and actions, perhaps) the kids will often get into the song as well. Teachers have a lot of power to set the tone.*  
—Joe Stouffer Sinclair  
Ottawa, Ontario