

Faith of Mary and Duties of Martha

By Parah Israel

Only a privileged few were considered true friends of Christ when He lived on earth and Mary, Martha and their brother Lazarus were amongst the few. They lived in a town a bit east of Jerusalem called Bethany. Their friendship provided Christ with solace and love, especially when the hour of His death was nigh. And though their story is short, it holds weighty wisdom, especially for us who desire to be hospitable servants of the Lord.

Our sister Martha learned the heart of hospitality one-on-one with Christ when He was a guest in their home. Being the gracious hostess that she was, Martha busied herself with the cooking and the serving of the food.

Mary, on the other hand, whose belief and faith waxed very strong, chose to listen to Christ's teachings instead of helping her sister in the kitchen. Martha grew annoyed with Mary and approached Christ with her dilemma,

LUKE 10:40 Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

Christ reminded His dear friend Martha of the importance of keeping her spiritual priorities in order,

LUKE 10:41-42 ⁴¹ ...Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: ⁴² But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Clearly, it was more important for Martha to learn from Christ who would be alive only but for a moment longer, than it was to be concerned with the preparation and serving of the food. Wrong was not Martha's devotion to fine cooking and serving, as these are important talents of a godly woman, nor is it to say that Martha did not love the Lord, but nonetheless, these worldly cares must never supersede the tending to the spiritual cares of the home. At one point or another we have all fallen victim to having "Martha" moments. Key is for us to recognize these moments and reevaluate our priorities:

II CORINTHIANS 13:5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

Mary once again displayed her great faith and devotion to Christ when she anointed Him. While in the home of Simon the leper, Mary went to Christ with a flask of precious and costly spikenard oil. Spikenard was a special oil reserved to anoint the dead before burial and worth equal to one year of a person's salary. Mary poured the oil over Christ's head and feet

and wiped it with her hair. One of Christ's disciples, Judas Iscariot, called her out and rebuked her for lavishly wasting the oil instead of selling it and giving the money to the poor. But Christ admonished Judas and praised the works of Mary by saying:

MARK 14:6-9 ⁶ And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. ⁷ For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. ⁸ She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. ⁹ Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

Once again, Mary cared for that which was spiritually needful over worrying about the carnal cost of the oil she poured over Christ. She was being hospitable by anointing her Savior and King, so why not give the best to our King!

As a woman of your own home, what is the first thing you think of when you say the word, *hostess*? Martha Stewart. Proper etiquette. Tastefully decorated house. Delicious hors d'oeuvres. Impeccable service. A fine cook. Charming. "A Hostess with the Mostest." Our Holy Bible defines an honorable hostess as one who is,

I TIMOTHY 5:10 ...well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.

Such a definition makes obvious that righteous hospitality requires far more than just fine cooking and proper etiquette.

Take a moment to seek out the meaning of righteous hospitality as it is written in our Holy Bible:

THE AMBIANCE – Make sure that the radiance of your holiness shines brightly before your guests by and through your diligent study and obedience of the commandments.

PROVERBS 31:18 She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night.

THE GREETING – The greeting of your guests should be joyful, embracing, welcoming, and warm as our brother Paul advised,

II CORINTHIANS 13:11-13...Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. Greet one another with an holy kiss.

Obvious in your demeanor and those of your household should be the love of YHWH when greeting your guests (I John 5:3).

THE MEAL – Take time to prepare the food, putting your holy spirit into your cooking. It is not the fancy meal that wins the heart of your family and guests, but it is the meal made with love and dedication,

PROVERBS 31:15 She riseth also while it is yet night and giveth meat to her household and a portion to her maidens.

THE ATTIRE – Take pride in your dress which represents holiness, modesty, and strength,

PROVERBS 31:22, 25 She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple...Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.

THE CLEANING – Take pride in the ordering of your home...a great sense of satisfaction comes from a clean home that is free of clutter and free of sinful filth. It is an accomplishment worth much praise,

ECCLESIASTICUS 26:16 As the sun when it ariseth in the high heaven; so is the beauty of a good wife in the ordering of her house.

THE ENTERTAINMENT – Plan your duties timely so that you are not consumed in the kitchen or elsewhere, away from your guests. Enjoy their company, cater to them, give them reason to praise your service,

ECCLESIASTICUS 32:1-2 If thou be made the master lift not thyself up, but be among them as one of the rest; take diligent care for them, and so sit down. And when thou has done all thy office, take thy place, that thou mayest be merry with them, and receive a crown for thy well ordering of the feast.

THE ACTS OF CHARITABLE LOVE – Remember to open your home to the disciples of Christ [Matthew 10:40-42], to those who are in need of the Gospel [I Corinthians 16:19], and to those who are less fortunate [Proverbs 31:20].

TITUS 1:8...a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;

ROMANS 12:13...distributing to the necessity of saints.

THE READINESS TO SERVE – Prepare yourself to serve at all times,

LUKE 12:40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

Serve with loving dedication and without complaint or resentment.

I PETER 4:9 Use hospitality one to another without grudging.

Be prepared to serve all those who are your brothers and sisters, whether a friend or stranger,

HEBREWS 13:2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unaware. .

Righteous hospitality requires that you tend to the spiritual before the physical. Your first duty must be to Christ (Luke 12:31). It is an office which requires that you live by the fruit of the spirit,

GALATIANS 5:22-23...love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance

Whether you are hosting a birthday party, a ladies' night out, a family dinner, a church meeting or a holy convocation, Christ will not forget your humble service as a righteous hostess and will reward you accordingly,

PROVERBS 31:31 Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.