

**A FAST Biblical Portrait: Martha and Mary**  
***Two Sisters Who Prioritized A Loving Relationship with God***  
John Kain, 2010

*An encounter with Jesus during his life on this earth did not necessarily translate into faith and devotion. In fact, his mission and divinity were generally misunderstood and often opposed, even by his family members and neighbors. During his three years of ministry, Jesus called various men to be in close relationship with him as his disciples. Jesus and his disciples sometimes visited the home of his friend Lazarus and his sisters, Martha and Mary, and the two sisters became Jesus' friends as well. In one particular interaction Jesus had with Martha and Mary, we see how to make a loving relationship with God our top priority.*

In our day and even more so in Jesus' day, hospitality demands much of those who welcome guests into their home. Martha and her sister Mary gave a warm reception to Jesus and his disciples (Luke 10:38), but it wasn't easy to prepare a meal, make sure the guests were comfortable, and clean up afterward. At one point Martha became frustrated with her sister Mary's lack of attention to the practical duties at hand, and she shared with Jesus her frustration (Luke 10:40).

Many men and women have the work-oriented personality of Martha, and we appreciate their ability to get things done. In fact, godly men can learn much from Martha in her attention to details, her servant heart, her activity for the Lord, and her open communication of her distress to Jesus. His tender response to her complaint indicated both his respect for Martha and the importance he placed on expressing a basic truth that she—and we—needed to hear: “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).

**Choosing the Better**

Many of us are prone to worry, and our anxiety may be especially evident in those of us with an obsessive personality. Worry impacts our ability to make good decisions, to live in the here and now, and to see and keep focused on what is really important—and loving God is what is vitally important to our spiritual growth. Therefore godly men must learn to be continually responsive to his presence within us.

So, when we find ourselves “worried and upset about many things,” we need to remember the words that Jesus shared with his friend Martha.

We need to choose “what is better”: we need to respond to the person or situation the Lord has put in our path. Don’t let worry distract you and keep you from walking in the Spirit and being considerate of today; don’t let yourself be consumed by concern for tomorrow.

And at this point we turn to Mary and consider the merit of her decision to focus on Jesus. We learn that her location at Jesus’ feet was not the result of just going with the flow. Jesus explicitly described her devotion to him and her attentiveness to his teaching as a decision: “Mary has chosen what is better.” Mary’s behavior was not the result of laziness or a choice of good over bad. Instead, Mary had to choose between two good options: either pause to listen to God or help her sister get the meal ready. Either choice may have been appropriate, but Jesus ranked Mary’s choice to sit at his feet as the **better one** in this particular situation.

Regardless of your personality—whether you’re easy-going or driven, analytical or energetic—you will make wise decisions when you base them on your love for God. Whether you determine to choose time with God when other good uses of your time are pressing (as Mary did) or whether you find yourself frustrated with life’s overwhelming demands and take your complaint directly to God (as Martha did), learn from these sisters to welcome God into your home, to communicate with him, and to learn from him.