



From His Hands
MINISTRIES

The Women in Christ's Life: Mary ... Sister of Martha
by Kris Swiatocho

Originally published by Crosswalk.com

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article is part of the The Women in Christ's Life series.

My mother is only one example of a woman who has impacted my life as a result of her relationship with Christ. Throughout this series, I want to share with you about some of the other women who have impacted my life solely because of their relationship with Jesus. I believe as I share that you, too, will connect with them and discover for yourself how God has always had a plan for you, is working it out in your life and will never leave you.

Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages," He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

— John 12:1-8

"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. What had this woman done? How could she have taken this very expensive perfume and just poured it on Jesus? Look at all the controversy over his life. Who is he to deserve such a royal treatment? What could he have possibly done for Mary for her to spend this much money on Him?

Mary, sister of Martha is one of my favorite women in the Bible. She loved Jesus so much as He loves her. She loved him by showing it. Do you remember Mary? She's the woman who sat a Jesus' feet to hear Him teach while her sister Martha complained about doing all the work. She is also the sister of Lazarus, one of Jesus' best friends of whom He loved. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead but of course after he had been dead for four days. Mary and Martha both would have to learn patience from Jesus. Through the raising of Lazarus they would have to learn about God's timing and purpose.

For some reason in my mind, I picture Mary as being younger than Martha. Maybe it's because Martha is work focused, like a mother hen. I picture a young, single, woman perhaps acting independent of her siblings, which sometimes got her in trouble. I picture a woman who built friends easily. A woman who wasn't afraid to take the next step. A woman who was ready to challenge anyone for her Savior.

Years ago when I first read about Mary and her sister Martha, I was always accused of being a "Martha". It would never fail. Every small group that studied the story of the lives of these women would inevitably ask the question, "So which one are you Kris? No, let us tell you ... you're a Martha." Ha ha!

Argggh, why wasn't I ever told I was a Mary? I want to be Mary, the good sister, the right sister, and the smart sister. Mary made all the right decisions, didn't she? Yes, for the most part Mary did make some good decisions but her choices were based on her relationship with God. Mary didn't just pop out of her mother's womb and figure all of life out. I believe as she grew in age and knowledge, she also grew in faith. Faith that would be tested. Faith that would put her in situations



that could harm her. The reason no one ever called me "Mary" was because I wasn't there yet.

Now, if you remember from reading my article on her sister Martha, I think our best choice is to be a mixture of both sisters. There is a time we need to work and get things done and there is a time to kneel at the Christ's feet and just listen. Mary had learned the right choice first, before her sister did.

What I Have Learned From Mary, Sister of Martha:

1. Faith can be tested by God.

Mary's faith would be tested when her brother Lazarus had died. Word was sent to tell Jesus' that Lazarus was dying. Jesus chose not to go right away to heal him but instead wanted God to be glorified by raising Lazarus from the dead. When four days had passed, Jesus arrived at Bethany. Martha went out to meet him and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." Jesus told Martha that Lazarus would rise from the dead. Mary had chosen to stay at the house. Martha went back into the house to tell Mary that Jesus was there. Mary quickly ran outside to meet him:

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. Jesus himself would also cry. — John 11:1-43

Mary's faith had been tested. She knew who Jesus was yet, she couldn't fully conceive of his power. She had granted him the power to heal Lazarus but not the power to raise him from the dead. Mary, like most of us, has a tendency to put God in a box. Even Mary had done this to an extent, but would quickly learn of just who Jesus was to her and others. Jesus wants us to understand his power and His purpose. Are you putting Jesus in a box? Do you limit Jesus in what He can do?

2. It's OK to be passionate about your relationship with Christ. Mary is shown in three accounts to be at Jesus' feet. Have you ever seen some of those old movies where someone was leaving and the person hung onto their legs and wouldn't let them go? I remember as a child, my father who was gone most of the time would be leaving once again to travel across the ocean to some third-world country. My father didn't enjoy being married nor having four children. He would hastily gather his duffle bag and military gear and run out the door. I remember clinging to his boots, not wanting him to leave. I would be nine or ten before I would realize it was best that he had left, as he wasn't a very good father. However, my passion and tears were real. I think of Mary and her passion and tears for Christ. She clung to His feet to not only learn, but because it was a position of submission. A place that showed her desire for Him to not leave her. Jesus would have to acknowledge her at His feet and respond. He would, with His own tears. Maybe it's your time to be at His feet, too. — John 12:3, Luke 10:39, John 11:32

3. Our actions based on our relationship with Christ could endanger us. Mary would be at the dinner for Jesus with her brother Lazarus and her sister Martha. Once again, we find Martha serving while Lazarus is sitting down to eat with others. Mary would come in and pour very expensive perfume oil on Jesus' feet and wipe them with her hair. First of all, just her body position would have been a call for alarm, but the fact that she used her hair would have been considered sexual. Back in those times women covered their heads, so using your hair on a man's body would have been very risky. Mary had taken a huge risk in anointing Jesus with this perfume. The perfume was also very expensive. Many at the table including Judas would question her choice in pouring this perfume on Jesus. Mary had to know she would get questioned and even accused of something worse. Mary loved her God and he was worth it to her. — John 12:1-8

Tell me: Is our God worth it to you? Would you be willing to give up a month's salary to Jesus? A year's? Would you give away your best coat, your favorite piece of jewelry, and your best set of dishes, your TV, or your car? How much is Jesus worth to you? Mary knew what He was worth to her.



4. Mary planned for the future.

Judas said this perfume could have been sold to feed the hungry. Jesus knew that Judas didn't care to feed the hungry but his real care was for himself.

"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me." — John 12:4-8

Mary knew that this perfume was not only a symbol of her value for Christ, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, but also in preparation for his burial. She knew he was going to die. He would die for our sins. She invested in Christ for "our" future. For the next generation and so on. What an amazing woman she was! Do you think she could have ever known how her actions have affected so many generations? What about your actions?

Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come. — Psalm 71:18

5. Jesus will affirm and protect the righteous.

"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. — John 12:7

Wow, leave her alone. Do you realize that Jesus will speak on your behalf? That Jesus will protect you when you are doing His work. That he will go before you and prepare the path. Recently I was eating lunch with some friends. I waited to see if any of them would speak to our waiter and invite him to church. I am sad to say that no one spoke up. Most of the time I am the one who speaks up and asks their name. I know from being a waitress in my younger days and from asking waiters, they really don't like "Christians". They tell us we tip horribly, demand too much service and then leave tracts on the table like we have done some amazing thing. Woo hoo for us!

Well, I have decided I want to be different. I want to build a relationship with my waiter. I know I can go to any restaurant in the world and have any waiter, but God gave me this waiter at this restaurant. What would be my part? You see, it's not about me, it's about Christ and the future generations. As I began to talk to the waiters, I would find out so much information. You find out they are people who have needs and desires just like you. Then it hits you: God has prepared this path for us to meet. God has gone before me to align this up. God is affirming my actions by the seeds that are planted.

Also, just like Mary, I am living the example to others by showing them how to start a conversation that may lead to this person accepting Christ, visiting or joining our church, etc. Mary, by her actions of being at Christ's feet, is our example of what God expects of us. As we continue to share our lives with others and tell them about Jesus, God will affirm and protect us.

Like Mary, as I have also grown older and wiser I have begun to see the value of sitting more at Christ's feet. That only when we are at his feet can we learn enough about him to enjoy our relationship. That as we enjoy our relationship, we get direction for our lives. Bottom line, the more time we spend with Jesus the more we know who He is, what He wants from us, how to live and have purpose.

A friend of mine, Tara Leigh Cobble, who is a writer and musician, recently wrote an amazing book called "Here's to Hindsight: Letters to My Former Self." She is quoted as saying "The higher we go, the farther we are from His feet." As I meditated on what she said, it made incredible sense. Mary knew that staying at Christ's feet whether it's to learn, to plead for help, to submit or to show how much she loved Him is what keeps us close to Him for all things. Sometimes we may look funny to the world. Sometimes, people may not understand. Sometimes, we may even get persecuted. But it's worth it ... to get to Christ.



From His Hands
MINISTRIES

Can you smell the perfume, the sweet aroma? It's filling the room as we speak.

Kris Swiatocho is the President and Director of TheSinglesNetwork.org Ministries and FromHisHands.com Ministries. Kris has served in ministry in various capacities for the last 20 years. An accomplished trainer and mentor, Kris has a heart to reach and grow leaders so they will in turn reach and grow others. She is currently working on her third Bible study, *From the Manger to the Cross: The Men in Jesus' Life*. Her second Bible study, *From the Manger to the Cross: The Women in Jesus' Life*, was published last fall and is available on her websites. Her first book, *Singles and Relationships: A 31-Day Experiment*, was co-authored with Dick Purnell of Single Life Resources.

TheSinglesNetwork.org Ministries helps churches, pastors and single adult leaders evaluate, develop and support their single adult ministries through high-energy speaking engagements, results-oriented consulting and training and leadership development conferences and seminars. Click here to request a FREE "How to Start a Single Adult Ministry" guide.

FromHisHands.com Ministries is Kris's speaking ministry. If you've ever heard her speak, you know that Kris is the kind of speaker who keeps the crowd captivated, shares great information and motivates people to make a difference in the lives of those around them! She speaks to all church audiences on everything from "first impression" ministry to women's topics to singles and young adults. She can speak on a Sunday morning, at a woman's retreat or for a single adults conference. Bring Kris to your church today!

Singles and Relationships by Kris Swiatocho and Dick Purnell

Many singles are Christians who wonder if God will ever bring a mate their way or if they should just stop focusing on a future with a marriage partner and live the single life to the fullest. Kris Swiatocho and Dick Purnell offer solid biblical answers for singles in this newest title in Dick's popular 31-Day Experiment Bible study.