



No.22 Mary of Bethany - sitting at His feet

Luke 10:38-42; John 12:1-11:

The story of Mary follows on from Anna in the previous lesson. Mary was probably around Jesus for most of His ministry time as He regarded her family as His friends. 'Mary seated herself at the Lord's feet and listened to His teaching' **Luke 10:39** so she chose her place in His presence just like Anna. This has been partly covered in Real Women Lesson 17 when talking about her sister Martha. Mary had spent time listening to Jesus so when the shock of her brother Lazarus' death occurred, Mary was challenged in her reaction and not sure how to react. In this lesson we

want to look a little deeper about growing an intimate personal relationship with the Living God. It is so possible to turn good service in the Kingdom into Christ less work! We can guard ourselves against this by ministering to the Lord and fulfilling His agenda not our own on a daily basis.

Sitting at His feet.

Mary knew what it was like to sit at Jesus' feet and adore and worship Him.

Mary knew how to respond to the draw of the Holy Spirit to make Jesus the priority of the day.

Mary knew Jesus well enough to know the kind of service that He would want at that time.

Mary knew that serving was not as important as knowing Jesus closely, **Titus 1:16**.

Mary was willing and keen to obey Jesus, whatever anyone else thought even her closest companion, without any excuses or justification, **1 Samuel 15:22**

Mary knew that worship at Jesus' feet was the only way to strengthen her for what was coming

Mary was well aware of God's love for her after watching Jesus' behaviour towards all manner of people and listening to His teaching, which was so different to the religious people of the day. She understood that God loved her so much that she was around where Jesus was, but she also made a choice to listen to Him as much as possible. This understanding of God's love caused her to love Jesus more and more, which was sealed when her own brother was raised from the dead.

Imagine having been close to Jesus and then having a disaster leading to your brother dying and the one person in the world who could maybe help you stayed away and didn't seem to care. Then when He does come He calls your brother out of the grave and he is alive. This causes your friend a great risk to His life but He is so happy for you. This is amazing love right before your eyes, so you are lead to give Him your most valuable possession the next time you are with Him.

Mary knew what Jesus needed and determined that she would fulfil His needs whatever people round her thought. She took the alabaster bottle, which was probably her dowry, her future and broke it and poured it over Jesus' feet. The amazing thing about Mary is she is a woman who took what she had in her hand and gave it to the Lord wholeheartedly. She didn't look at others and go "I am not clever like her; don't have the wealth; the time; the looks that she has; I can't do anything for Him; I may get in the way; He may not appreciate it; what will the men say" She just had a passion for Jesus and offered Him all she had, **without any holding back**. Cultivate the presence of Jesus and let His presence come into you.

Jesus went to the Cross a few days after this incident and He took nothing with Him except the smell of the oil from the alabaster bottle which will have pervaded His whole body and reminded Him as He sweated and struggled up the Golgotha road to the Cross all the devotion and love of Mary.

We know from the life of Mary and Martha that Jesus said

'Mary has chosen the good portion (that which is to her advantage) which shall not be taken away from her' **Luke 10:42 AMP**.

We need to learn how to choose the better place when everything round us is busy. Mary's whole focus was Jesus and as we choose that for ourselves our desires and choices change to come in line with God's will for us, which is the best for us.

As we minister to Him so He ministers to and through us. If we seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, all the things that we need will be added unto us, **Matthew 6:33**

Let us Pray

According to Jesus, our prayers should be simple and uncomplicated. He gave the greatest key to prayer in **Matthew 26:39** when He said "... not as I will, but as You will". It is not us asking for what we **want**, but allowing God to tell us what we **need**, and what He has therefore purposed to give us. **1 Thessalonians 5:17** suggests that we should "...pray continually....." to be in constant communion with God. "My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me." **John 10:27**

So we should pray: - a) Simply b) Not hypocritically c) To the Father d) Always - continually and therefore...e) everywhere f) In the Name of Jesus.

Prayer takes many forms, like all communication.

Praise – Psalm 52:9; Psalm 68:3

Worship - Psalm 100:2

Waiting - Psalm 46:10

Confession - Psalm 139:23

Word praying - Jeremiah 29:29

Listening to God - Colossians 4:2; Ecclesiastes 5:1-3

Intercession - 1 Timothy 2:1-2

Petition - Matthew 7:7; Genesis 25:21

Thanksgiving - 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Meditation - Joshua 1:8

In the Spirit - Roman 8:26; Ephesians 6:18

Agreement - Matthew 18:19

Binding and Loosing - Matthew 16:19; 18:18

Prayer of Faith - James 5:15.

Private prayer - Jesus went to a place alone with the Father. Matthew 14:23.

Overcoming prayer - Matthew 6:6; Matthew 26:40-41; Philippians 4:6-7; Exodus 32:9-14.

With fasting - Luke 4:1-2; Acts 13:2-3.

Every disciple of Jesus Christ should pray.

Colossians 4:2 Don't be weary in prayer; keep at it; watch for God's answers, and remember to be thankful when they come.

Matthew 6:5 "And now about prayer. When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who pretend piety by praying publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. Truly, that is all the reward they will ever get.

Philippians 4:6 Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs, and don't forget to thank him for His answers.

1 Peter 4:7 The end of the world is coming soon. Therefore be earnest, thoughtful women of prayer.

Matthew 26:41 Keep alert and pray. Otherwise temptation will overpower you. For the spirit indeed is willing, but how weak the body is!"

1 Timothy 2:8 So I want men everywhere to pray with holy hands lifted up to God, free from sin and anger and resentment.

Opposition to our praying will arise in three areas:-

Self - The self-life (we sometimes call it "the old nature") **Romans 7:18-25**

Sin - Separates us from God and breaks the communion. (Answer - **1 John 1:7-9**)

Satan - He will always oppose our praying. **Ephesians 6:12. Matthew 26:36-46.** This shows the opposition against Jesus' life work.

No.22 Mary of Bethany - sitting at His feet. Challenge Questions

Read the notes about Mary of Bethany

1. What do you think about her relationship with Jesus. Do you find it easy to spend time quietly with Jesus? What can you do to make this easier for yourself or what advice have you got for anyone who has a problem in this area?
2. What do you have in your hand that you could give wholeheartedly to Jesus?
3. Which two forms of prayer do you find easy and which two do you find difficult? Look up the verses beside them on the list. From the example of Mary could you get help to improve in these areas?
4. From the three areas of opposition to praying which do you find hardest to deal with and what weapons can you use to win the battle?

Read 1 Samuel 1:1-20

5. How does the Bible describe Hannah's position in the first two verses of this chapter?
6. What was the yearly ritual that Hannah and her husband went through? Who were the priests at Shiloh who was their father?
7. What was Hannah's problem? Why was this such a serious issue for her? Do you think this is the same today?
8. How did her husband treat her and why? How did her rival treat her? What was the result for Hannah?
9. In her desperation what did Hannah do? What vow did she make to the Lord?
10. As she continues to pray what was Eli's reaction? Why do you think he did not understand what she was doing?

11. When Hannah replied to Eli what do you think of her reply? What was her attitude behind her response?
12. After Eli gave her God's blessing what is her response by faith? What are her actions expressing her faith in God?
13. Is there any area of your life where you have prayed; know you have God's Word on the situation, but have not yet seen the physical outworking of the answer to prayer? Could Hannah's response be the action of faith you need to take?
14. How do you think Hannah managed to draw close to God when she felt so disappointed and desperate?

Read 1 Samuel 1:21-28

15. Why did Hannah choose not to go with Elkanah to Shiloh for the yearly sacrifice?
16. After Hannah had weaned Samuel what did she do? Approximately how old was he?

Read 1 Samuel 2:1-11; 1 Samuel 2:18-21

17. Read Hannah's prayer. What points really spoke to you? Could you use in any personal prayer yourself?
18. Who do you think she may have been thinking about in **1 Samuel 2:3**? How would she feel now her disgrace had been turned round?
19. What was young Samuel doing when in the temple at Shiloh? Who did he learn that from? How can we teach our children to pray? How young do you think you should start praying with them?
20. How was Hannah blessed in her later life? Read **Mark 10:29-30** Can you see this as relevant to any situation you have been in?
21. Write a short sentence summing up what you have learnt from this study?