

MIGHTY IN SPIRIT

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From where she stood, Martha could hear Jesus discussing the Passover with her dear brother Lazarus. The lovely aroma of perfume spread through the house as Mary washed Jesus' feet.

Martha mixed olive oil, water, and salt into the flour. Joy rose in her heart as she stood by the trough, readying the bread for their dinner. She knew she was creating an inviting and comfortable atmosphere for the visitors. As she kneaded the dough on the stone table, Martha contemplated the first time Jesus visited her house.

He was an important man, and Martha was determined to make Him comfortable as well as impress Him with the efficiency and luxury of the household. She cooked, accommodated guests, and kept track of every detail. Yet with all her good intentions, she found that her preparations were too extensive, and her hopes for making His visit perfect were quickly slipping away.

Her sister, Mary, was oblivious to the fact that pitchers needed to be filled, plates cleared, and pillows fluffed. Martha's frustration mushroomed. She considered it of utmost importance to care for the fine points so that others could employ their gifts with ease. However, in her quest for their comfort, her anger became overwhelming. Martha lashed out, and Jesus gently corrected her.

Still, Martha knew He loved her and when Lazarus grew very ill, she turned to Jesus for hope. It was so painful watching Lazarus die. Faithfully she served her brother. She brought him food and water, kept him clean, ministered to his every need, but to no avail. No matter what she did, she could not make everything right. She could not stop death from taking him. When Jesus finally came, Lazarus had been in the grave for four days.

Mixed with her intense grief, Martha faced immense frustration and disappointment. She knew that if Jesus had only come sooner, Lazarus would have lived. Still driven by protocol, Martha went to meet Jesus. It was then that Jesus pierced her heart with the truth.

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

"Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God" (John 11:25-27). She said it, but the truth of it struck her when the Lord raised Lazarus from the dead. What amazing power Jesus had! What joy to have Lazarus alive again! She understood, at that moment, that nothing she could do would honor Him sufficiently. Anything she could give Him could only be a simple gift of devotion.

As Martha set the newly baked bread before Christ, it was no longer an act of work, but one of worship. Seeing her resurrected brother speaking to the Savior filled her heart with praise. She no longer served Him to gain acceptance, she did it out of adoration.

Martha was mighty in Spirit because she recognized that to serve was to act in praise of Christ. His love was not something Martha had to earn or orchestrate, it was the great gift Jesus freely bestowed. With Lazarus's death, she realized how insignificant her plans really were. With Lazarus's resurrection, she recognized she could trust God to give her abundant life.

Each person has certain things that they like done right and areas where they excel. The gifts that God has given you can be used to express praise to Him, especially if you use them with a grateful, joyful heart. They also can be a source of bitterness and resentment if they become your avenue for seeking acceptance and prestige. Avoid getting so bogged down in the mechanics of service that you forget who enabled you to serve, and whom you are serving.

Martha had a reputation for hospitality and took great pride in being revered as an excellent hostess, yet it was a natural outpouring of her love for Christ. You can either proclaim Christ with your actions or you can seek your own advancement. Your talents can either be used with an attitude of praise or an attitude of self-promotion. As you express your gifts today, consider what your testimony will be.

Will you, like Martha, proclaim that Jesus is the Son of God?

Will you serve out of praise to Him?

Will you choose work or worship?