

MARY – ONLY ONE THING IS NECESSARY
MARY OF BETHANY, SISTER OF MARTHA AND LAZARUS

Her name is rarely mentioned in the Bible. **She does not** have a specific book that portrays her story, like **Ruth**; nor was she a **queen** with great leadership, like **Esther**; nor did she have a special purpose from God, like Mary, **the mother of Jesus**. However, today she is remembered for one of the most sublime displays of love in history, and it was her total surrender that made her special in the eyes of God.

Mary of Bethany—better known as the sister of Martha and Lazarus. It is barely mentioned in three **texts** of the Bible, but those three mentions were enough to leave great teachings of what represents a woman who loves without reservation.

Mary of Bethany knew who to turn to in the midst of adversity.

The context: Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were friends highly esteemed by Jesus. One day, Mary's brother, Lazarus, became terribly ill and she, along with her sister, decided to tell Jesus, because they knew that only He could help them (John 11:3). Lazarus died, but Jesus already knew what would happen (John 11:4) and in His own time, He returned to see His friends. What happened next? When Martha and Mary realized that Jesus was coming, Martha ran to meet Him, but **Mary stayed home until Jesus called her** (John 11:28-29). *"When the people who were in the house comforting Mary saw her leave in such a hurry, they thought she was going to the tomb of Lazarus to weep.* So they followed her. When Mary came and saw Jesus, **she fell at His feet** and said, "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died" John 11:31-32.

In the midst of such a terrible circumstance, where there seemed to be no hope, Mary **had confidence in Jesus**, and it was only when she stood before Him that she unloaded her pain, after all, **Mary knew that only He could give her the comfort and strength she needed.**

Mary of Bethany had her priorities very clear. She understood what was really important in her life. .

Luke 10:38-40. When Jesus came to visit, **Mary put everything aside and sat down to listen to her Lord**, while her sister, Martha, was busy with the preparations for the supper. Seeing Mary's attitude, Martha was upset and asked Jesus to urge her to help her, but Jesus did not respond as she expected. **Every sister should read and meditate a lot on this text and always put the first thing first. Matt. 6:36.**

*"The Lord said to her, 'My dear Martha, you are so worried and anxious with all the details! "***But only one is necessary and Mary has chosen the good part, which will not be taken away from her."** Luke 10:41-42.

For Martha the food of the body is of utmost importance but how long does the body last? For Mary, the most necessary thing is to nourish the spirit that lives forever.

By "choosing the best part," Jesus meant that those whose priority in life is Christ, knowing Him, and being close to Him, have chosen what will last into eternity, such as "gold, silver, and precious stones" mentioned in 1 Corinthians 3:11-12. From this incident, we learn that those who are distracted by the mundane and the earthly are building on the foundation that is Christ, with "wood, hay, and straw," materials that will not be able to withstand the fire that will come to us in times of trial, nor will they be remembered in eternity. Martha's words to Jesus allows us to see her heart and mind as she tried to make everything perfect and was so distracted that she lost sight of who it was she was talking to. Mary's silence, which we will see again in another event, indicates a lack of concern for herself, especially to defend herself. When we focus on Christ, He becomes our greatest passion and our tendency to selfishness dims and fades.

This allows us to see that Mary of Bethany **was very interested in the Word of God**, always attentive to what came from God, concerned about learning from Jesus and treasured more than anything to be with Him and listen to Him. **She understood that putting God first was the secret of a full and victorious life. In the midst of a hostile world, she chose to love without caring about "what they will say."**

John 11, their brother Lazarus is raised from the dead. When Mary hears that Jesus has come and is calling her, she immediately goes out and leaves those who were crying at home and hurries to meet Jesus. So great is her love for Him and her desire to please and obey Him that she leaves those who had come to comfort her and puts herself in the arms of the great comforter the world has ever known. Jesus sees her great sorrow and weeps along with her, even though He knows that her sadness will be short-lived and that her brother would be restored to Him momentarily. In the same way, when we grieve and weep, our greatest comfort is found in Jesus, whose compassion is limitless. When we put our hand in the nail-scarred hand, we find comfort, peace, and security, and we learn the truth of Psalm 30:5b: "Weeping shall last in the night, and in the morning joy will come."

A few days before Christ's crucifixion (Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8) a meal had been prepared at the home of Simon the leper, probably a leper who had been healed by Jesus and become one of His followers. Martha was again serving while Lazarus was at the table with Jesus and His disciples. Jesus came to Bethany to visit Lazarus again (after his resurrection), Martha and Mary. Times were not good, in the atmosphere of the city there was already hatred for Jesus, because there was a plot to

kill him. It was then, in the midst of all this, that Mary did the unthinkable: "Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil". **John 12:3.**

That perfume that Mary poured on Jesus was so costly and unique that it was valued as a year's salary! Now think, what is that thing that you treasure most in your life? And would you be able to deliver it completely? Thinking about the value of what, for some, was a waste when it could have been used to feed the poor (John 12:4 / Matthew 26:8-9).

Pouring out such a costly perfume may be illogical to many, but **Mary understood that Jesus was not just any person either, and an extraordinary person is worthy of extraordinary things.** Thus, in the midst of hostility, while some pointed to her and others planned to kill Jesus, she did not care about "what they will say" and decided to honor him with the most valuable thing she had. Only when you love in this way is it possible to honor God as Mary of Bethany did, so her story is remembered until today.

"I tell you the truth, wherever in the world the good news is preached, what this woman did will be remembered and spoken of" Matthew 26:13.

Her relationship with Jesus led her to understand things that no one understood.

Throughout the Bible, we can see repeatedly that Jesus spoke to his disciples of his death and resurrection, but each time, they seemed not to understand this until it happened. For Mary, it wasn't. After pouring out her perfume, this is what Jesus said about her: *Why do you criticize this woman for doing so good to me? There will always be poor among you, but you will not always have me. She has poured this perfume on me in order to prepare my body for burial"* Matthew 26:11-12.

Illogical as it may seem, Mary did not act impulsively. She spent so much time at her friend's feet that she **came to understand and accept, better than the other disciples, Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.** The disciples were saddened and did not want to hear about Jesus' death, but Mary's relationship with Him led her to fully understand that He would gain only through His sacrifice and suffering.

Mary, with her perfume, prepared Jesus for the victory of his death, aware that afterwards, she would have no opportunity to anoint him. You see, after Jesus' death, when the women went to his tomb to anoint him according to Jewish customs, Jesus was no longer there, for he had already risen.

Undoubtedly, her genuine dedication, passion for God, strength and understanding, are attributes that made Mary of Bethany a woman worth remembering and admiring.