

Sermon Series: When Relationships Collide

To Be Used With: Session One “Even Christians Collide”

Sermon Title Possibilities: “The Business of Heaven” or “What Is Necessary?”

Sermon Text: [Luke 10:38-42](#)

Introduction

“And Jesus said to him, ‘You go, and do likewise’” (Lk. 10:37 ESV). These words of Jesus come immediately before the story of Mary and Martha in Luke’s narrative. The emphasis in Luke 10–11 seems to be on *doing*, whether it be; evangelizing (10:1–12), repenting (10:12–15), helping your neighbor, who might even be your enemy (10:25–37), praying (11:1–13), and obeying God’s word (11:28). One might naturally take sides with Martha and think that she is quite justified in her frustrations with Mary, and perhaps even Jesus. After all, the need in our world is great! One could easily point to the vast number of those with no knowledge of the Gospel, no Bible in their language, and no Christian living among them. David Platt says there are 4.5 billion people who “if the Gospel is true, at this moment are separated from God in their sin and a (assuming nothing changes) will spend an eternity in hell” ([David Platt, *Radical*](#), 76). Others may point to the condition of many churches in this country and the mounting opposition to the Gospel that seems to make headlines everyday. We have work to do!

[Read Luke 10:38–42]

Many of us resonate with Martha in this story. But while Jesus confirms that some things must be done, one necessary thing is elevated above them all. We see in this story a conflict. The conflict is not between two enemies or two co-workers. Rather, two sisters who love Jesus, and who want to honor Him, are disagreeing over how this should be done. As you learned in your small group, the issue here is priorities rather than visible sin or disobedience. Three things stand out in this passage. First, where they agreed. Second, where they disagreed. And third, the resolution of Jesus.

1. Where they agreed (vv. 39–40).

Mary and Martha agreed on one thing: Jesus. Mary wanted to sit at his feet and hear his teaching. Martha apparently wanted to be sure all the preparations remained in order. You might say Mary focused more on being with Jesus, while Martha devoted her attention to doing things for Jesus. Neither of these are bad or sinful. The motives and intentions, as far as we know, were pure. This was not the source of their conflict.

When Christians disagree over a particular area of ministry, theology, methodology, or practice, they are rarely arguing over which one loves Jesus the most. They are not questioning each other’s intent or motives, though it may appear that way on the surface. Most often when Christians disagree or dispute with one another, it is precisely *because* each of them love Jesus and want to honor Him. In fact, their love of Jesus is what is driving them to disagree on a given issue. When part of a congregation wants to use particular funds for missions while another wants to pour the funds into the worship ministry, both of them are expressing their concerns out of love for Christ. All biblical Christians agree that Jesus should be the focus of our lives. That is

not up for debate. The Apostle Paul declared that as long as Christ was proclaimed, he had reason for rejoicing (Phil. 1:18).

Application: Have you ever questioned someone's love for Christ when they disagree with you about an area of ministry or practice? How can you celebrate one another's passion for Christ rather than calling it into question? When in conflict with other Christians, be sure to identify areas where you agree despite the conflict.

2. Where They Disagreed (v.40)

While Mary and Martha both loved and treasured Jesus, they disagreed as to how to express their affection for Him. In fact, Martha sternly expressed her disapproval with Mary over her apparent lack of concern for the tasks at hand. While Mary does not seem to push back against this, it is clear that whatever Martha was doing, she had no interest in joining her.

This story is a window into the heart of many Christians. When disputes arise between two Christians who love the Lord, they often center around how to best love Him! Larry Osborne refers to this as gift projection. He says, "Gift projection takes place whenever we begin to project our own unique gifts and callings upon everyone else, as if our assignment should be their assignment, and our strengths their strengths. At its core, it's an arrogant assumption that my calling is the highest calling, and my gifts are the best gifts" (Larry Osborne, *The Contrarian's Guide To Spirituality*, 144). Ouch! How many of us are guilty of this in the church today without even knowing it? God is clear about what should be a universal passion for all Christians. We all are called to love Him, obey His commands, and pursue holiness. But if our passion is worship and singing, we may think everyone's passion should be worship and singing. If we are called to plant a new congregation in a influential city, we may think all Christians should do the same.

Application: What are some things that all Christians should pursue? What are some things that only some Christians should pursue? How can we be more patient and humble when someone does not share our same gifts or passions?

3. The Resolution of Jesus (vv.41–42).

Jesus, in the most gentle and winsome way, resolved the conflict between Mary and Martha. At first glance it appears he sided with Mary. But notice he never told Martha to stop doing what she was doing. Rather, he pointed to the fact that she was "anxious and troubled about many things" (v. 41). He never told her to stop doing these things. His concern was her heart. Being with Him mattered the most. Listening to Him was essential. The meal, the preparations, the house, and the material things would all be perish one day. But knowing Jesus and being in His presence could never be lost.

One must be careful not to rebuke the *Martha's* of the church in favor of the *Mary's*. Work has to be done. Jesus is not undermining the need to *do* things. He is simply pointing to what should be the guiding purpose of our lives; being with Him. Our eyes cannot be fixed mainly on what we do, but rather on Him and what He's done for us. He died for us. He rose again. He is returning one day to renew all things. This is the work that should capture our mind and hearts. When this work, this Gospel work, is grabbing our attention, many of the conflicts we experience

can be resolved. Only then can the work we do for Him fall into its proper place in our hearts. Paul said, “But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal. 6:14). We boast in His work, not ours.

Application: How can the work of Christ get lost in the work we do for Him? I encourage you to preach the Gospel to yourself daily and fix your mind on Christ work. Only then can you plunge into your work or particular area of passion with the peace and confidence you need.

Conclusion: Christians disagree. What should be done in the church, how money should be spent, and what should be emphasized will continue to be a point of contention and disagreement. But we must never lose sight of Christ and fail to behold the great work He accomplished for us. While this does not answer all our questions about what should be done, it does give us a foundation to relate to one another with kindness, humility, and love.

Maybe today you are experiencing conflict with another brother or sister in Christ over issues similar to this. Will you look at the Gospel? Will you lift your eyes to Christ and what He’s done rather than what someone else should be doing? Only then can our conflicts move toward a resolution.

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