



# DINNER IS *served*

A One-Act Biblical Drama

What happens when our eyes get out of sync? We can't see clearly. Everything is out of focus.

The ophthalmologist might prescribe monovision therapy where a single contact lens is worn in one eye for near vision, and the other eye wears a lens for seeing distance. The result is 'balanced vision.'

Balance is an even distribution—not too much or too little of anything in all aspects of our lives. Think about all the things we try to balance—God, fam-

ily, church, work, play, rest, and that is only a partial list. Finding balance in our living is a continual process, and, yes, it is complicated.

It takes a deliberate effort to control and conserve our time and attention. Scripture includes an event where Jesus addresses the issue of focus and balance.


(Read Luke 10:38-42.)

## Scene I

Our story opens as Jesus and His disciples are making the journey to Jerusalem.

**Narrator:** "Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village:" (Luke 10:38a)

John 11:1 tells us this village was Bethany, a small town about two miles from Jerusalem.



***Narrator:*** (Luke 10:38b) "...and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house."

In those days, hospitality was important. Guests were welcomed with a kiss, sandals removed, feet washed, and heads greased with refreshing, perfumed oil. Martha, who obviously possessed the gift of hospitality, and also a deep love for Jesus, "received him into her house," without hesitation.

Head of her household, Martha was an influential citizen of Bethany and a devoted follower of Jesus. She was probably a widow, living in the house inherited from her husband, and, as the oldest child, she had opened her home to siblings,

Mary and Lazarus. She was personable, capable, and responsible—and bold as demonstrated when she later speaks her mind.

Jesus and this family were very dear friends. Needing to find rest, Jesus knew this home would welcome Him.

It is important to stop and consider that Jesus' entourage could easily total 13 people (Jesus + 12 disciples), plus any interested stragglers who were following along.

Thirteen people (to welcome in the traditional way), plus Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, totalled at least 16+ people to host and feed.

***Narrator:*** "And she had a sister called Mary," (Luke 10:39a)

Mary, Martha's younger sister, was characteristically passive and quiet. In John 12:3, Mary demonstrated her deep love for Jesus by pouring expensive per-

fume over His feet.

Though definitely opposites in personality, these two sisters loved Jesus and served Him faithfully.

***Narrator:*** "...which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word" (Luke 10:39c).

Many commentators believe Mary possibly entered the house with Jesus and the

disciples, for Jesus had many women followers. When Jesus sat down, Mary, eager to listen



and learn, immediately sat down at his feet, the position of a student. Other commentators interpret this phrase to mean Martha sat down at Jesus' feet and Mary "also sat." Martha desired to sit and listen, too, but her mind was reeling—she had guests! She could not sit long.

**Application:** Do you have the gift of hospitality? How would you react if your pastor and the 15-member church board showed up for dinner unannounced?

Are you a 'Martha' in personality? Does being a Martha often throw you out of balance? If so, how do you get back in balance?

Who was more spiritual, Mary or Martha? Explain your answer.

## Scene 2

Martha left Jesus and busied herself taking care of feeding her numerous guests. The passage does not say, but Mary probably helped briefly. (It is

hard to believe she shirked the obvious responsibilities.) But her heart was not in it. She longed to be back with Jesus, so she abandoned Martha.

**Narrator:** "But Martha was cumbered about much serving," (Luke 10:40a).

Let's change a word: "Martha *was burdened* about much serving." Consider that Martha's meal preparation ceased to be a joy and turned into a burden.

What kind of menu had her tied up in knots? A festive menu in those days might look like this:

*Main entrée:* Roasted lamb with mint sauce (1½-2 hours to roast).

*Side dishes:* Chard salad with lentils and beans, mustard greens, artichokes

*Bread:* Homemade

*Dessert:* Pear compote (made with dried pears boiled in wine and water together with honey)

Her supper mushroomed into a feast and caused her much stress and anxiety. Yes, her heart desired to serve her absolute best to the Savior, but her service as a way of ‘worship’ turned idolatrous. Distracted by her labors, she lost her focus; a perfect meal occupied her mind and heart more than Jesus did.

She wasn’t seeing 20/20 anymore; she was out of balance.

Have you ever been in the kitchen preparing your elaborate meal and the conversation from the living room sounded so inviting? You could not cancel the meal, nor could you jump ship. Martha’s feelings exactly! And besides, how often would she have the opportunity to entertain the Savior of the world? She decided this meal had to be perfect, even if it killed her! And it looked like it might. She needed help and resolutely went to get it.

***Narrator:*** “and came to him, and said,” (Luke 10:40b)

***Martha:*** (pitiful, frustrated, bold, demanding) “Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me” (Luke 10:40).

Martha understood that Jesus was comfortably approachable. They were dear friends. She could ask Him anything. “Lord, dost thou not care?” Martha’s self-pity moved her to try to guilt Jesus. And she was so self-focused. “... MY sister hath left ME ... Bid her therefore that she help ME.” She clearly resented

Mary’s decision to sit with Jesus.

Was Martha trying to say: “I love you, too. I want to be sitting with you, too. But someone has to feed this crowd. In this moment, isn’t this what I am supposed to do?” Martha compared her circumstances to Mary’s, and she felt mistreated. That comparison stole her joy in serving.

***Application:*** What is wrong with wanting to make an impressive meal? Have you ever done something to win someone’s approval?

Motivation is the key. Right down several Scripture passages on pride.

How do you keep your service to God in balance—making it truly an act of worship? (Matthew 22:37; Colossians 3:23; Deuteronomy 10:20)

Can the routine (cooking for your family, washing dishes) be transformed into something holy? Read Colossians 3:17. Find other Scriptures that support this idea.

### Scene 3

**Narrator:** “And Jesus answered and said unto her,” (Luke 10:41a)

Before she ever approached Him, Jesus already knew Martha’s anxiety and her loss of

focus. Despite her demanding complaint, He knew her heart and He loved her.

**Jesus:** (the God-man, Savior of the world, Teacher, omniscient, omnipotent, Miracle-Worker, the One Who loves deeply and unconditionally, spoke to His dear friend with tenderness and compassion): “Martha, Martha,” (Luke 10:41b)

Jesus was neither angry nor frustrated with her. Frazzled, distracted, maybe a trifle mad and definitely out of balance, Martha came to Jesus, and He

accepted her ‘just as she was.’ Yes, He was disappointed in her sin, but listen to the intimacy and tenderness as He repeats her name, “Martha, Martha.”

Maybe He reached out and touched her. His presence en-

veloped her with such deep love that His rebuke had no sting.

**Jesus:** “thou art careful and troubled about many things:” (Luke 10:41c)

Notice Jesus did not say, “You have it all wrong, Martha!” Because she did not have it ALL wrong. He recognized this elaborate meal preparation was all done for Him—this was Martha’s act of worship; thus, the tenderness in His response.

Martha’s meal had grown into a banquet to impress. She slipped past her act of service and worship and slipped into sin. Losing her focus on the One

for Whom she was serving, she became self-serving.

Jesus did not say, “Martha, you should not have fixed this meal.” (Although had she asked, Jesus could have easily fed this crowd.) He did not condemn her for her activity but used the moment to point out that her motives were hindering her spiritually. Serving Jesus should not cause anxiety and stress. Serving Him should bring joy.

**Application:** Like Martha, are you worried and anxious about many things? Read Psalm 46:10. Meditate on Who God really is. How can this verse help you?

What advice would you give Martha about achieving balance in her life?

**Jesus:** “But one thing is needful:” (Luke 10:42a)

Don’t be encumbered by physical things (although physical things are sometimes necessary) because the “one thing”

that needs our focus is Jesus and His Gospel. To learn more about Him and to love Him more deeply, full immersion into

His Presence and His Word is imperative. With Jesus as our

priority, He will bring balance to every aspect of our lives.

**Jesus:** "...and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42b).

Mary knew a meal needed to be prepared, but she also realized the significance of Jesus' visit. Even though it angered her sister, Mary rightfully chose the 'good part.'

In those days learning about Jesus and knowing Him better required spending time with Him. Mary understood that Jesus spoke the words of salvation and eternal life—intan-

gibles that could not be taken from her.

(Jesus' response to Martha was not exactly what she wanted to hear, but His words did not fall on deaf ears. John 12:2 finds Martha serving supper to Jesus again with no complaints. She had learned how to stay balanced.)

And abruptly, the story is over—The End.

**Application:** What did Mary have that Martha needed?

What was the "good part" that Mary chose?

How do you make Jesus your number one priority? Proverbs 16:3; Psalm 37:5; Matthew 22:27

Scripture does not give Martha's response. But what could have happened next?

Released from the stress that held her captive, Martha replied, “Yes, Lord.” Lovingly chastised, she felt no ill-will towards Jesus or Mary. Instead, she felt totally and completely loved. Going back to the kitchen, she quickly changed the menu to roasted lamb sandwiches and salad and immediately served the meal. (Those are my thoughts, what are yours?)

If Jesus has sanctioned both work and worship, how do busy women find the needed balance? Here is a list that might help you.

1—Give everything in your life to God.

2—Ask Him to set your priorities.

3—Limit distractors. Set your time with God first, then add service and activities back carefully and prayerfully.

4—Focus on what God leads you to do.

5—Ask God to direct each day; allow the Holy Spirit to set limits to keep you in balance.

God calls us to love and to serve. If He calls us to do both, then certainly He will help us balance both. Martha was not wrong to serve; she was wrong when her serving caused her to lose focus on the One she was serving, and it threw her out of balance. God wants us to be productive, but He also wants us to rest and enjoy times of fellowship with Him, too (Matthew 11:28-30). Never try to work for Christ without taking time to commune with Him. A living, personal relationship with Him is just too important to ignore.


We might say, hey, if Jesus were here in person, I would definitely stop what I was doing and sit and listen to Him! Well, think about it—He IS here—living in our hearts and speaking to us through His Word and our prayers. Don’t waste the blessing of His Presence; make Him your priority.

In Gilbert, Arizona, Redemption Church embraces this precept: “ALL OF LIFE IS ALL FOR JESUS.” A simple statement, but if we genuinely believe it and live by it, Jesus will keep us balanced and focused on the “good part,” Himself.

Charles Wesley beautifully captures the meaning of Luke 10:38-



42 in his hymn, "Lo! I Come with Joy."

Lo! I come with joy to do  
The Master's blessed will,  
Him in outward works pursue,  
And serve His pleasure still;  
Faithful to my Lord's commands,  
I still would choose the better part:  
Serve with careful Martha's hand,  
And loving Mary's heart. 

**About the Writer:** Dari Goodfellow and her husband, Sandy, live with their daughter and family in Gilbert, Arizona. They are daily enjoying four wonderful grandchildren.



Have you read the recent article in the June/  
July issue of [www.onemag.org](http://www.onemag.org) (page 14-18)?