

Treasured: Mary of Bethany

At His feet, Mary of Bethany sought to know the love of Christ and to be filled with all His fullness (Ephesians 3:19). There, she came to understand that God offered His Greatest Treasure because she was of infinite value (John 3:16).

In return, Mary lavishly poured out her heart and her most valued possession. There was no cost too great, nothing she was unwilling to sacrifice to express her adoration and gratitude for Him. To her, Jesus was worth everything.

1. Do you believe loving Jesus is worth any cost? Explain.
2. Read Mark 14:3-9, and the parallel account in John 12:1-8. What was the value of Mary's offering? (Compare to John 6:5-10.) How might Mary's extravagance have consequently affected her life?
3. Would you be willing to offer such a gift? Do her actions reveal any personal limitations in your relationship with Christ?

Mary of Bethany appears only three times in the Gospels. Although each encounter with Jesus is different, one thing remains the same: Mary at His feet.

4. Read Luke 10:38-42. What was Martha's concern? What words are used to describe her?

5. Jesus does not condemn Martha's service but corrects her perspective. Of what did she accuse Jesus and her sister? What advice did she offer Him?

6. Do situations such as these cause you to feel you are of no value to others or to God? Explain.

7. Why should sitting at Christ's feet precede service? What occurs when these things are reversed?

8. Why was Christ unwilling to grant Martha's request?

9. Although Mary was criticized for her choice, she seemed to believe the cost was worth the reward. What did Mary value above all else? How does Matthew 6:25, 31-33 apply?

The second time Mary is mentioned is in John 11:1-44. After sending word to Jesus about her brother's illness, Mary and her sister expected that He would immediately come to Lazarus' aid. But while they waited, Lazarus died.

10. What did the messenger report to the sisters (v.4)? What thoughts and emotions might Jesus' claim have evoked in Martha and Mary upon Lazarus' death?

11. Why might the author have felt the need to communicate Christ's affections for Martha, Mary, and Lazarus? (vv.3-5) Would circumstances such as these cause you to question your worth to God?

12. When Mary learned that the Teacher was calling for her, how did she respond? (vv.29, 32) What had she concluded about His lack of action, His will, and purposes? (v.32, Also consider vv. 21, 37.)

13. Contrast Jesus' response to Martha's and Mary's statements. How does this speak of His individual care for them? For you?

14. Christ knew the outcome of Mary's trial and yet He wept. Why?

15. Martha and Mary sought Christ to heal their brother, but Jesus wanted to accomplish far more than they could imagine. What was His greater purpose? What did He need them to understand? Read Jeremiah 32:27 and Matthew 19:26.

Mary must have carefully considered how she could give back to the One who *had given* and *would give* so much. Her extravagant gesture was not merely an act of service, but an outpouring of what was in her heart.

16. Return to John 12:1-8. What freed Mary to express her love for Jesus in this way? What are *your* offerings to God based upon?

17. For the second time Mary was met with harsh criticism while she sat at Jesus' feet. In what ways can loving Jesus without inhibition "cost" you? Why are some unwilling to pay such a price?

18. Based on Judas' words and actions, what was Jesus' worth to Judas?

19. How was Mary prized for "[doing] what she could" (Mark 14:8)—giving her most valued earthly treasure to the One who would soon make an invaluable sacrifice for her? (14:9)

20. In closing, read Luke 6:38 and Ephesians 3:14-21.