



*Becoming Fully Devoted Followers  
by Studying the Followers Before Us*

**WEEK 43**

**MARY, MARTHA,  
AND LAZARUS**

**OCTOBER 22-26, 2007**

DAY	<i>THROUGH THE BIBLE</i>	ABBREVIATED STUDY
Monday	John 1-2, Psalm 61	Luke 10:38-42, Psalm 61
Tuesday	John 3-4, Psalm 62	John 11:1-16, Psalm 62
Wednesday	John 5-6, Psalm 63	John 11:17-27, Psalm 63
Thursday	John 7-8, Psalm 64	John 11:28-44, Psalm 64
Friday	John 9-10, Psalm 65	John 12:1-11, Psalm 65



Connecting people to abundant life.

**READ**

Luke 10:38-42

Psalm 61

**REFLECT**

Mary, Martha and Lazarus were siblings who lived in the village of Bethany, two or three miles southeast of Jerusalem. The Gospels tell us that Mary, Martha and Lazarus were close personal friends of Jesus, and that He visited them in their home on numerous occasions. What must it have been like, to be friends with Jesus?

Martha appears to be a "homemaker," concerned with household details, while Mary is seen as more of a scholar. On this visit, Martha welcomes Jesus into the home, makes Him comfortable, and then retires to the kitchen to see about a meal. Mary sits at Jesus' feet, hanging on His every word. It may be that the house is messy, or that Martha is unprepared to feed Jesus' entourage, because after a while she comes out of the kitchen and interrupts the conversation saying, "Master, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work? Tell her to help me."

I am struck by the honesty of this passage and what it says about family and friends. How typical of sisters to fight over chores, and how secure Martha must have felt in her friendship with Jesus, to scold Him! I find myself agreeing with Martha. Mary *should* help serve the guests. Yet Jesus cuts through Martha's hard feelings saying, "Martha, dear Martha," (can you hear the tone in His gentle voice?) "you're fussing far too much and getting yourself worked up over nothing. One thing only is

essential, and Mary has chosen it – it's the main course, and won't be taken from her." Mary chose to simply sit and listen and *be* in our Lord's presence. She chose worship over work.

**RESPOND**

Fall is a busy time in the life of our church. Stewardship is upon us, budgets are due, new programs are being launched, special services and events are being planned, Thanksgiving and Christmas are just around the corner. It is easy to become overwhelmed by all the work, and to forget why we are here. Our first priority is to seek the Kingdom of God. And what better place to seek it, then at Jesus' feet?

**PRAY**

Thank you, Lord, for reminding us that what is important to us is not always what is important to You. Help us to know when to be still and listen and just *be* with You. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

- C.B.

**READ**

John 11:1-16

Psalm 62

**REFLECT**

Lazarus is the subject of one of the longest narratives in the Gospels, yet little is known about him personally. He must have been fairly well to do, as he was a good provider for his sisters and was able to entertain guests in his home. We know he was the brother of Mary and Martha, that he fell ill and died, and that Jesus raised him from the dead.

The miracle of Lazarus' resurrection is responsible for the conversion of many Jews – it was what convinced them of Jesus' divinity – yet not one word of Lazarus' is recorded in the Bible. Even so, we can learn many things from the story of Lazarus' death by the way others responded to it.

Twice in these first sixteen verses we are told that Jesus loved Lazarus and his sisters. He had a special relationship with this family. They provided Him with a safe haven, a place where He could unwind, kick His shoes off and have a nice meal. Yet when He heard of Lazarus' illness, he delayed. By then the area around Jerusalem was not safe for Jesus and his disciples. Jesus had been performing miracles and breaking the old laws. The authorities had already tried to arrest Him several times. No one would blame Him for staying away. Yet Jesus didn't stay away out of fear, but because He had a plan to show God's glory. He used the occasion of Lazarus' death to lead others to the Lord.

**RESPOND**

How difficult it must have been for Mary and Martha to wait by their brother's sick bed. They knew Jesus could heal their brother. Where was He? The temptation to give up must have been very great. Most of us have faced the death of a loved one, and had to deal with the fear, anger and sadness that go with it. We don't understand why our loved one had to leave us. But like Mary, Martha and Lazarus, we must trust that the Lord knows what is best for us, and that all things work for His good and glory.

**PRAY**

We are so grateful to have a special relationship with You, Lord. Thank You for Your love and Your friendship. Give us the patience to wait for Your plans to unfold, and the wisdom to recognize and appreciate that outcome when it comes. Amen.

- C.B.

**READ**

John 11:17-27

Psalm 63

**REFLECT**

When Jesus finally arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had been dead and buried for four days. The house was filled with friends and relatives mourning the loss of Lazarus. Ever bold, Martha leaves the wake and meets Jesus in the street, scolding, "Master, if you'd been here, my brother wouldn't have died." She knew Jesus could have healed her brother, and was puzzled by His late arrival. Jesus tells her, "Your brother will be raised up." Martha believes in the promise of the resurrection, but doesn't suspect that Jesus is speaking literally.

What follows is the greatest promise we can hope to hear, and is worth repeating. Jesus says, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. The one who believes in Me, even though he or she dies, will live. And everyone who lives believing in Me does not ultimately die at all." This is our assurance of eternal life. This is why we do not have to fear death.

Martha believed this promise, but many others – even some disciples – doubted. Over and over Jesus had to prove Himself through signs. Over and over He told us that all we needed to do to achieve the Kingdom of Heaven was to believe. But still we doubt. How stubborn and unfaithful we humans can be! But Martha knew who Jesus was. She confessed this faith, "Yes Master. All along I have believed that You are the Messiah, the Son of God, who comes into the world." And today her confession is one of the rocks upon which our church is built.

**RESPOND**

When was the last time you reaffirmed your faith through confession? Many believers confess their faith through reciting the Apostles' or the Nicene Creed. As often as we confess our faith, God blesses us. Let us recite what we believe.

**PRAY**

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, Our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into Hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into Heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

- C.B.

**READ**

John 11:28-44

Psalm 64

**REFLECT**

Mary, the more spiritual and sensitive of the sisters, was overcome with grief by the death of her brother Lazarus. While Martha was talking with Jesus, Mary and her friends were at home weeping and sobbing. When Jesus summoned Mary, she also rebuked Him for not saving her brother from death. Jesus became angry at all the crying and carrying on. Hadn't He promised that Lazarus would be raised? Yet even our Lord was sad at the passing of His friend. Jesus also wept.

"Jesus wept" is famous for being the shortest phrase in the New Testament, according to Wikipedia. It's important because it demonstrates that Jesus was fully human, feeling all the emotions of a man. He may have been weeping because even those closest to Him still doubted His identity. He may have been thinking about the suffering He was about to endure on the Cross. Or, He may have been weeping because Lazarus would be leaving Heaven to return to Earth once Jesus resurrected him.

Jesus demanded to be taken to Lazarus' tomb, and commanded for the stone to be removed. Ever practical Martha points out what must have crossed every person's mind – that after four days there was certain to be a foul stench! Yet Jesus is determined to show them the glory of God. Jesus prays a simple prayer asking His Father to prove His *bona fides*. He shouts into the tomb, "Lazarus, come out!" And

Lazarus does come out, still wrapped in his shroud, but uncorrupted. It seems Lazarus was the only one who truly had no misconceptions about what was going on. He was called, he obeyed, and he received life.

After that, many Jews believed in Jesus. This was the last straw for the Pharisees, who plotted to kill Jesus from that day on.

**RESPOND**

For a man who said nothing, Lazarus' story speaks volumes about love, friendship, faith, belief, hope, death, miracles and everlasting life. Even those most dear to God must endure sickness and sorrow at times. To have faith in Jesus is far more important than to have health and comfort. Those are temporary conditions, while life with the Father is everlasting.

**PRAY**

Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Your Son to us, that we might defeat the grave. Strengthen our faith when we doubt and surround us with Your love. We pray this in Your Son's precious name. Amen.

- C.B.

**READ**

John 12:1-11

Psalm 65

**REFLECT**

Six days before Passover, Jesus returned to Bethany for a dinner. In attendance were Mary, Martha and Lazarus. It was a dangerous time for Jesus, and anyone caught with Him, but that didn't stop the friends from showing their love for each other. Lazarus, fresh from the grave, must have been particularly eager to see Jesus and to thank Him. Martha, unable to help herself, continued her show her love of her Master and family through service, while Mary went out of her way to prepare a special treat for Jesus. Mary came in with a jar of expensive aromatic oil, and proceeded to anoint and massage Jesus' feet, wiping them clean with her own hair.

When was the last time you went to a dinner party, only to have the hostess wash your feet? It's not something you'd normally encounter. At most, we go to the salon to get a pedicure, sitting with our feet in a tub of antiseptic, temperature-controlled water. A glove-wearing technician rubs off any unsightly calluses, while we peruse a magazine or watch the latest soap opera on TV. Yes, it feels nice, but there is no love or intimacy about it.

Mary's was an act of pure love and worship, and foreshadowed Jesus' washing of His own disciples' feet. Judas Iscariot, that famous betrayer, was offended by Mary's generosity and kindness, but disguised his jealousy and greed by criticizing the gift. But Jesus, now firmly on the

path to the Cross tells him to leave Mary alone adding, "You won't always have Me."

The resurrection of Lazarus was the beginning of the end for Jesus' ministry on Earth. Eyewitness accounts of the raising of Lazarus spread like wildfire, so that the crowds swelled and the Pharisees felt their loss of control. The dinner with Mary, Martha and Lazarus may have been the last peaceful moment Christ had until His final hours in the Garden of Gethsemane.

**RESPOND**

The Jewish women of Jesus' time were not in the habit of showing their hair, so Mary's act of wiping His feet with her hair was particularly intimate. Her love, devotion and gratitude to Jesus was so great, she ignored the mores of her time to honor our Lord. What will you do to show your love and devotion?

**PRAY**

Dear God, we are grateful for the personal connection we have with You through Your Son Jesus. How awesome it is to have Jesus as our dearest and best friend. Thank you for the examples of faith, love and courage set by Mary, Martha and Lazarus. May their stories stay with us and teach us what it means to be in fellowship with You. Amen.

- Christine Boling

