

Mama Should Have Named Me Martha

Anyone who has ever lived on the farm knows that the work is never done. No matter how hard you work, no matter how long you work, no matter how much technology or equipment you use, you never get finished! There is always something else that needs to be done - and it needs to be done now!

There are always fences to put up or to put back up. There is always a cow or a horse or two that needs tending. There is always a piece of equipment that needs fixing or needs to be serviced to keep it running in the future. There are animals to feed, bulls to test, breeding plans to establish, feed to buy, minerals to put out, hay to move, calves to tag, vaccinations to give, show or sale animals to groom, neighbors that need helping, pastures to spray, fertilize to put out, and on and on and on the list goes - not to mention the record keeping!

For those of you who have ever served full-time in the ministry or know someone intimately who has, know that it too is a job where there is always a much longer list of things to do, lessons to plan, and people to see, than there is time or resources to do it all. The truth is, all these things on the farm and in the ministry are important and have to be done at some point, to some degree, and by somebody.

Just the name "Cattle for Christ International" probably makes it obvious that my calling is to serve the Lord in both of these capacities and that there are no distinguishable "lines" that separate or compartmentalize the two. The CCI farm and the other aspects and responsibilities of the ministry are all important and all have to be done for us to accomplish our mission. Just running the CCI farm does not accomplish all that has to be done to fulfill our purpose; neither do the other ministry duties do so independently of the farm. Both aspects of the ministry have to be done if Cattle for Christ is to accomplish our mission of making the Gospel and love of Christ Jesus known to the nations.

So Many times I am reminded that my tendency is to be a "Martha" and not a "Mary". If you take the time to read the few verses in Luke 10:38-42, you will understand what I am talking about. It was Martha who owned the house Jesus visited and the house in which Mary lived. It was Martha who invited Jesus into her home. Scripture says she not only invited Jesus in, but that "she opened her home to him" (NIV) giving Jesus complete and unobstructed access to her home and her possessions. It was also Martha who worked so hard to make sure that everything was done that needed to be done, and that it was done correctly. I would guess she even made a list of things to do everyday like I do. I imagine she worked long and hard hours to accomplish all that she could- but never finished the list! There was always more to do than there was time, resources, and energy to do them all.

It is apparent in verse 40 that Martha even resented Mary and the others around her who were not doing enough, who did not have the same sense of urgency, who somehow could not see all that needed doing. Martha even complained to the Lord about her sister Mary who instead of helping her work, was just sitting at the feet of Jesus listening to Him and enjoying His presence.

In John 11:2 we learn that this Mary was the same Mary who had "poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair" as recorded in John 12:1-8. Mary anointed Jesus feet with expensive perfume and wiped them with her hair, again while her sister Martha was busy serving Jesus and the others at the table. Most every time Martha is mentioned in Scripture she was busy working, busy serving and almost always too busy to cultivate the intimacy with Jesus and with others that Mary enjoyed. Jesus told Martha that spending time with Him was more important than being busy. He was not saying that Martha's work was not important or that she didn't love Him and want to please Him, but that her priorities were out of order.

When Jesus arrived to raise Lazarus the brother of Mary and Martha from the dead (John 11), it was Martha who ran out to meet Him. It was Martha who professed her faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, and the Son of God. Martha professed her belief that her dead brother Lazarus would live again at the time of the final resurrection of the dead, but it was also Martha who protested to Jesus when he told the people to open the tomb of Lazarus. Martha knew Lazarus had already been dead for four days and that there would by now be a terrible odor from the decomposing body of her brother. She never thought that Jesus could raise Lazarus at this point in time. You see Martha had faith to believe that God was faithful and would accomplish His will in the by and by--in the end, but she did not have faith to believe that God could accomplish His will now. I am amazed at how often I find myself having the faith of Martha!

You see, what the Holy Spirit has to keep reminding me about, sometimes painfully so, is that though the work of the Lord is important, many things have to be done, and somebody has to do them; the work of the Lord is never more important than spending the time to be intimate with the Lord of the work! Sometimes we just need to be still, be quiet, and sit at the feet of our Lord Jesus.

Perhaps like me, as you ponder on these things, you realize that your Mama should have named you Martha too! My prayer is that you and I will do all that we can do to make Christ known to the world and to accomplish His will for our lives. I also pray that as we do the work we will not be so distracted by all the need and by all the work that has to be done, that we miss out on what is most important; our own personal relationship with the Lord Jesus. This relationship grows, deepens and gets sweeter, only when we spend the quality and quantity of time with Him that we need to; time just sitting at His feet, listening to Him and enjoying His presence. Only then will we be able to keep everything in its proper perspective.

Until next time, may "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you His peace."
(Numbers 6:24-26, NIV)