

July 17, Ordinary 16C (Luke 10:38-42)

## **I wonder whether Martha could feel cared for by Jesus.**

by [Crystal DesVignes](#) in the [June 29, 2022](#) issue

People say I am a good host. Good at welcoming people into my home, showing hospitality, making them feel comfortable, offering space for fellowship. But I don't necessarily like to be the host. I enjoy having people over to my home, the company of others and the fellowship that occurs. The part that is less attractive is the preparation—and the feeling that I am responsible for everyone having a good time.

I find myself so concerned whether there will be enough food, drink, dessert, and activities and whether everyone will have a good time. Will the house be presentable? When you have children, who knows if one will dirty the bathroom right after you cleaned it? Will I be ready before my guests start to arrive?

Sometimes my worry and exhaustion rob me of the opportunity to be present when my guests do arrive. I am so overwhelmed by what it means to host that I lose the joy of fellowship—the major point of hospitality. I do all the work to make space for fellowship, then I do not allow myself the gift of the time shared.

Martha welcomes Jesus into her home, while Mary sits at his feet and listens to him. Martha finds herself distracted with her hosting duties. Perhaps she is occupied with making sure everyone is having a good time, that there is enough food and drink. Sometimes we get weighed down with the intricacies of life, with things that are important but not imperative. Attending to the minor details becomes a major hang-up.

If Martha could stop preparing, hosting, and worrying long enough to fully enjoy Jesus' company, I wonder whether she could feel cared for by him. Maybe she could see him return the hospitality and welcome she has shown.

Jesus calls Martha and all of us to major in majors. Jesus is concerned with us, with the totality of our experience. The work we do, the things we worry about, our heart

and mind and spirit. We get this glimpse of Jesus' overwhelming love for our total being as we sit at his feet and listen to what he says. This can guide us to understand what is needful, what will have deep, even eternal impact. To be aware when we are getting distracted by many things and to choose Jesus—prioritizing “the better part, which will not be taken away.”

Jesus offers this to Martha. His correction to her inquiry is filled with love.

The Gospel of Luke is constantly illuminating and elevating the role of women. Martha is doing what society expects of women, expectations she has internalized. Mary, on the other hand, is doing something that would have been reserved for men. Jesus calls Martha to resist social expectations and to fulfill her role as a worthy disciple.

Today, too, some are seen as unworthy to sit at the feet of Jesus and to listen to what he is saying. For any number of reasons, they are kept from pursuing a life in his presence. Worried and distracted, they minimize their gifts, their talents are trivialized, their very humanity is diminished by a society that expects them to conform to its expectations. It takes a lot of encouragement, exhortation, and resistance from them to choose to live outside these societal expectations and to choose the better part.

I am getting better at hosting and learning to enjoy it as well. Mainly because I focus my attention on the excitement and thrill of who I get the pleasure of opening my home to in the moment. It is alright for me not to have the cleanest, most well-kept house. I can shed any societal norms about what is expected when hosting and fully show up as my authentic, sometimes frazzled self. My children get to be children and even mess up their rooms right before company arrives. I have learned to place my priority on the joy of the presence of my guests and the fellowship that will ensue when they arrive—not on the many tasks that can distract me and cause me to worry long before they have arrived and all throughout their visit.

We as followers of Jesus Christ have to learn to bask in the presence of the Lord. Since you have welcomed Jesus into your home, enjoy the fact that he has accepted the invitation and sit down.