

Jesus: A Life: Week 9

Jesus and Two Sisters

Big Idea: Pursuing Jesus must be out top priority.

Read the Bible:

Luke 10:38-42

STUDY

*** Before interacting with this guide, all leaders should study the referenced texts using the HEAR Method. It's also important to encourage your group members to read the text using the HEAR Method. ***

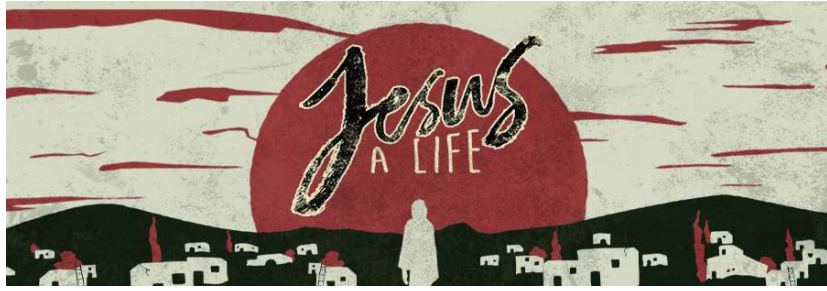
H: Highlight, or take note of, things in the passage that stick out to you as you read.

E: Explain what the passage means by asking simple questions of the text:

- **Why was this written?**
- **To whom was it originally written?**
- **How does it fit with the verses before and after it?**
- **Why did the Holy Spirit include this passage in the book?**
- **What is He intending to communicate through this text?**

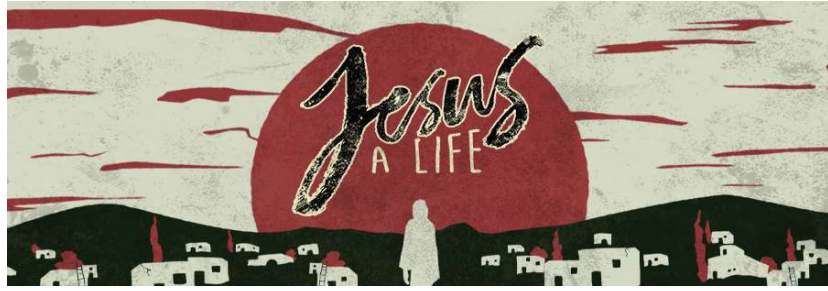
A: Appy the text to your life. What does God want you to learn from this text?

R: Respond to God in prayer.



Luke 10:38-42

³⁸ Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. ³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." ⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, ⁴² but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."



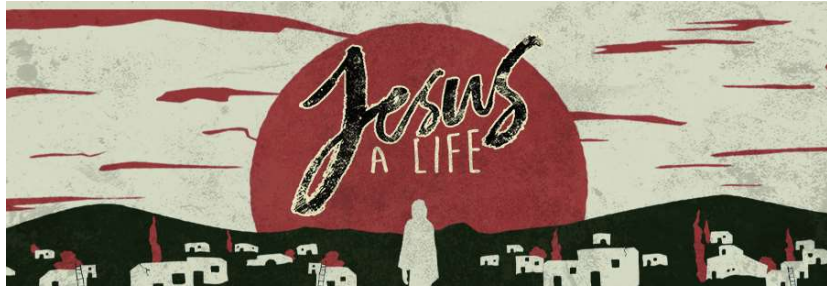
Summary

Jesus' ministry is progressing quickly. He's now sending out disciples ahead of him to preach the gospel and his face is set toward Jerusalem. However, on the way Luke interrupts Jesus' progress with a story about two sisters. One day as Jesus is traveling, he stops at the home of Mary and Martha.

Martha is a real type - A kind of person. Jesus comes in and she tries to get everything just perfect. She has her to-do-list and a plan to get it done. The house has to be clean. She needs to go to the market and get some food. The meal must be prepared, and the table must be set. Poor Martha works herself to death trying to make Jesus feel at home. You might think that Martha would have had help. After all, her sister Mary is there.

As Martha looked around the kitchen, Mary was MIA. Imagine her shock and frustration. Here she is working her fingers to the bone and where does she find Mary? Sitting at the feet of Jesus. Listening. Learning.

Martha won't stand for this. She goes to Jesus and asks him to set Mary straight. Jesus' response is not what Martha was expecting. Jesus tells Martha that she is in the wrong, not Mary. Mary had chosen the good thing. What's the good thing? Pursuing Jesus even when everything else is calling your name. Other things may need to be done, but not at the expense of knowing Jesus.



Leading Your Group

Community Time

Start group by asking for Prayer requests and checking in on everyone.

Bible Study

***Have everyone in your group read assigned scripture before meeting. ***

Start Group by Reading Luke 10:38-42

Major Lessons – (These are the “Lesson Points” in Class)

Point No. 1: If we are not careful, life can crowd Jesus out.

We all know this to be true experientially. We want to know Christ. We want to live for him. However, life often gets in the way. This is the point that Jesus makes in the parable of the sower with the seed that gets choked out by the thorns.

Luke 8:14 And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.

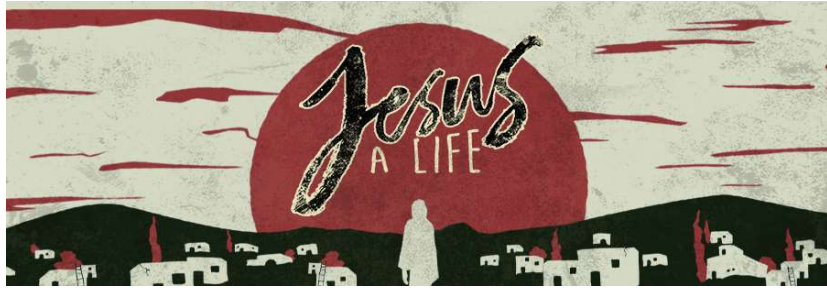
Seed that fell among the thorns got choked out by the cares of the world.

There are a lot of things in life that are good things, but we cannot allow the good things to choke out the best thing, our walk with Jesus.

Discuss: In your experience, how does life crowd out Jesus?

Point No. 2: Worship Should Lead to Service.

Martha finds herself exceptionally frustrated in serving. However, it's not that serving is a bad thing. It's just that Martha is serving God without taking time to worship God.



Distracted worship always leads to frustrated service.

The foundation of the Christian life is worshiping Jesus, and only after we have gotten to know Jesus in worship do we rise up to serve.

This order is imperative, otherwise we miss the heart of God.

When we worship Jesus, we get to know him in all of his goodness, grace, and power. When we worship, we begin to understand that we don't have to serve Jesus to make him happy with us. We serve Jesus because he is happy with us.

So proper worship leads to proper service. However, if our worship is distracted our service will be full of frustration.

Discuss: Have there been times when you have been frustrated with serving in some capacity because you didn't start with worship?

Point No. 3: We still need to sit at Jesus' feet.

Mary chose the good portion. We should follow her example and learn to sit at Jesus feet.

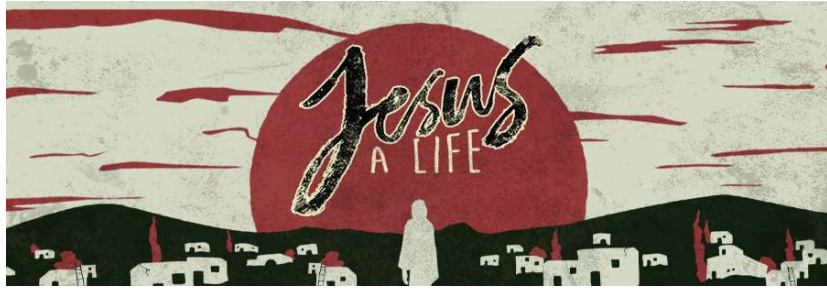
How do we do that now? We do that by trying to abide in Christ

John 15:1-6

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

This is why a quiet time is so imperative for a Christian. Bible reading and prayer are the main ways that we sit at the feet of Jesus and abide in Christ.

Discuss: Do you make it a priority to spend time in God's word and prayer? How?



Resources

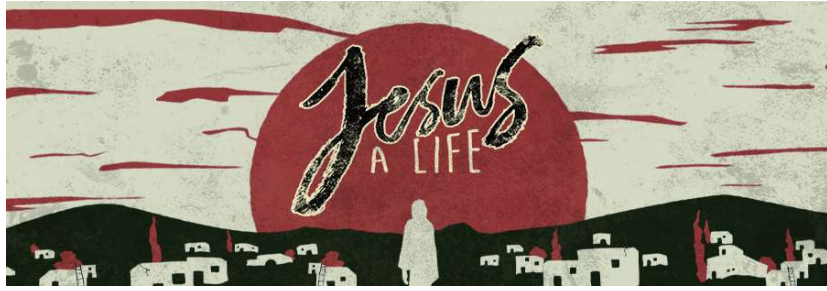
Expositor's Bible Commentary

2. *The home of Martha and Mary* (10:38–42)

In 8:1–3 Luke mentioned several women who traveled with Jesus and the disciples and contributed to their support. Now he tells about a woman who entered into discipleship. Once again Luke portrays the way Jesus transcended the prejudices of his day.

38–40 The travel theme appears in v. 38 (“on their way”), but Luke refrains from mentioning that the “village” was Bethany (John 11:1). Possibly he wants to reserve mention of Jesus’ ministry in Jerusalem and its environs till later (cf. 13:32–33; 17:11; 19:28; cf. comments on 9:51). The way Martha is mentioned seems to give her the role of hostess (cf. John 12:1–2). It is Mary, however, who takes the place of a disciple by sitting at the feet of the teacher (v. 39; cf. Acts 22:3—“under Gamaliel,” lit., “at his feet”). It is unusual for a woman in first-century Judaism to be accepted by a teacher as a disciple. Notice that Jesus is called “Lord” (*kyrie*) throughout this passage. Martha was “distracted” (v. 40), the verb *periespato* implying that her attention was drawn away by the burden of her duties. One can only speculate about the actual feelings she had toward her sister beyond what she said and about the personal differences between Martha and Mary. Martha’s concern seems to have been that she had to work alone rather than that she could not sit at Jesus’ feet.

41–42 The Lord shows concern for Martha’s anxiety (v. 41), but the precise meaning of his saying (v. 42) is partly obscured because of a textual problem (cf. Notes). There is no explanation of “what is better” (*tēn agathēn merida*, lit., “the good part”). Some have understood this to be the contemplative life, or placing worship over service. Manson (*Sayings of Jesus*, pp. 264–65) thought it was seeking the kingdom first. This interpretation has the merit of explaining Mary’s seeming neglect of household duties, which in comparison with the kingdom would have a radically diminishing demand on her. The word of the Lord has first claim. For the disciple an attitude of learning and obedience takes first place. The preceding narrative and parable establish the importance of priorities in the Christian life—i.e., heeding the commands to love God and neighbor. Martha must now learn to give the Lord and his word priority even over loving service. There are important human needs, whether of the victim in vv. 30–35 or of Jesus himself. But what is most “needed” goes beyond even these. The



thoughtful reader will recognize, however, that this spiritual priority is not the same as the sterile religion of the priest and Levite in vv. 31–32.

Notes

- 42** As the NIV footnote indicates, there is a textual problem here. Of the several variant readings, none has a clear claim to originality. Among these, the most probable choices resolve into (1) “few things are needed,” (2) “one thing is needed,” and (3) “few things are needed or only one.” NIV has chosen (2) for its text; the UBS text gives it a “C” rating. The NIV footnote has (3) Reading (1) has slim support from the MSS, but Marshall (*Gospel of Luke*, p. 453) thinks it is worth considering because “it is indirectly attested in the good Mss which have the conflate reading” (i.e., the one reflected in the NIV footnote). Also, if “few” means “few dishes of food,” Marshall says, “the change from ‘few’ to one’ is comprehensible; scribes were perhaps more likely to think that Jesus would give teaching not about practical hospitality but about the one spiritual goal.” In any case the basic meaning is clear—Martha’s and Mary’s priorities are contrasted.¹

Teacher’s Bible Commentary

The Meaning of Discipleship (Luke 9:51–10:42)

The passage.—Verse 51 marks a decisive point in the ministry of Jesus as presented in Luke. When the divinely determined time arrives, Jesus decides to go to Jerusalem, aware of the fateful consequences of such a decision. The rest of Jesus’ public ministry unfolds under the shadow of the cross.

Most of the subsequent episodes in this passage illustrate what it means to follow this Jesus who goes to his death. The encounter with three prospective disciples, the mission of the seventy, the lawyer’s question and the parable of the Good Samaritan, and finally the conflict between Martha and Mary—all these shed light on the meaning of discipleship.

¹ Walter L. Liefeld, [“Luke,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 944–945.



Special points.—The Samaritans (9:52) occupied the territory between Judea and Galilee. They accepted the Pentateuch as their Scriptures. They had their own priesthood and built a rival temple on Mount Gerizim, which had been destroyed by the Jewish ruler John Hyrcanus. Bitter hostility existed between Jews and Samaritans.

“The Son of man has nowhere to lay his head” (9:58) does not mean that Jesus was without shelter. Homes of friends evidently were open to him. What Jesus meant was that there was no place in the world where he was safe. A disciple had to be prepared to share this experience.

One of the highest duties of a Jew was to care for his father and give him an honorable burial upon his death (v. 59). But Jesus taught that the claims of the kingdom must take precedence over all others, no matter how sacred. The spiritually “dead” (v. 60) who have not responded to the proclamation of the kingdom can care for duties of secondary importance.

The mission of the seventy, like that of the twelve, was a rapid preaching campaign. The disciples, therefore, are told to “salute no one on the road” (10:4, RSV). They did not have enough time to stop for the long, ceremonial greetings customary in the East.

“Son of peace” (10:6) describes a person receptive to the message of peace or salvation. “Sodom” (v. 12) represented the epitome of human wickedness as well as divine judgment. The greater opportunity extended to the people of Jesus’ day implied a greater judgment on those who refused to repent.

The cure of the demon-possessed by the disciples represented a victory over the powers of evil and darkness. This was greeted by Jesus as an indication of God’s ultimate, decisive triumph over Satan (v. 18). Verse 19 cannot be interpreted literally. The fact of the matter is that the disciples were indeed *hurt* by their enemies. Some of them suffered martyrdom. But they could suffer no ultimate, decisive harm. God guaranteed their future, no matter what happened to them in the world.

The “wise and prudent” (v. 21) were men who arrogantly depended on their own intellectual capacities. The “babes” were humble folk who were receptive to God’s revelation of himself in Jesus.

The “lawyer” (v. 25) was a scribe, one of the Jewish religious experts. His answer to Jesus’ question (v. 27) combines Deuteronomy 6:4 and Leviticus 19:18. Deuteronomy 6:4 is the Shema, the basic Jewish confession of faith.

The limits of a person’s obligation to love would be determined by his definition of “neighbor” (v. 29). As generally interpreted, a neighbor was a fellow Jew. Pharisees might even exclude people like tax collectors and sinners. The parable of the good Samaritan (vv. 30–37) teaches that such limitations are wrong. The lawyer had asked the wrong question. He should have asked: To whom can I be a neighbor? Only with this attitude could he fulfil the commandment of love.



The parable also teaches that there can be no conflict between love for God and love for the neighbor. The priest and Levite both served God in the temple. They avoided the helpless man for fear of defiling themselves and becoming temporarily unfit for temple service. For all they knew, the naked man could have been a Gentile. Or, he could have been dead. Touching a corpse resulted in ritual impurity (see Num. 19, esp. vv. 11, 13, 17–19).

“One thing is needful” (v. 42) may be understood in two ways: (1) Only the spiritual part chosen by Mary was essential; or, (2) a simple meal of one dish would have sufficed.

Truth for today.—Jesus wants no superficial disciples, men so carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment that they are blind to the realities of the future. He always emphasized what it cost to follow him. Would he not chill the ardor of some of our evangelistic meetings just as he cut through the superficial enthusiasm displayed by one of his prospects for discipleship? We have tended to emphasize one aspect of the gospel, rightly proclaiming that salvation is a free gift of God’s grace. But have we at the same time emphasized that grace is also costly? Have we also stressed that love for God is not expressed adequately by worship in church alone? Jesus taught that service for God involves serving people who are deprived, hurt, and avoided by others.²

THE BIBLE PANORAMA

CHAPTER TEN

V 1–7: MISSIONARY MIND Jesus sends out His larger band of seventy disciples, two by two, and they are told that the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. He commands them to pray that God will send workers into the harvest field. They are to go, following His instructions as His disciples, and to lodge with those sympathetic to the message. **V 8–16: REPENTANCE REQUIRED** If a town will not receive the message and repent, they are to move to the next

² Malcolm O. Tolbert, [“Luke,”](#) in *The Teacher’s Bible Commentary*, ed. H. Franklin Paschall and Herschel H. Hobbs (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1972), 647–648.



town, shaking the dust off their feet. Jesus teaches that the punishment on the towns of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum—which now see Him at work, but reject Him—will be greater than that suffered in the past by the towns of Sodom, Tyre and Sidon. Those towns offended God but had not seen Him working in the same way that Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum witnessed. To reject the message and messengers of Jesus is to reject Him. **V 17–20: REAL REJOICING** The band of seventy return full of joy because they have been able to cast out demons. Jesus tells them to rejoice rather because their names are written in heaven. Success may evade them tomorrow, but their salvation is still secure! **V 21–24: SPIRITUAL SENSE** Jesus thanks His Father that His blessing is on those who come to Him as children rather than those who are learned in this world's sense. He stresses the oneness between Father and Son and underlines how blessed people are who have come to trust Him. Many kings and prophets in history longed to have the privilege of knowing God that those enjoy who trust Him now. **V 25–28: CONCISE COMMANDS** Jesus summarises the Ten Commandments into two: first, love God; second, love your neighbour as yourself. This is His response to a question as to what must be done to inherit eternal life. Clearly none of us has loved God or our neighbours like that. **V 29–37: NEIGHBOUR'S NEEDS** Jesus tells about the caring Samaritan, who goes to the help of a needy and injured victim of robbers, after two religious Jewish men fail to help him. The Samaritan also provides for the man's future care. Jesus teaches that anyone in need is our neighbour, and that we should all do 'likewise'. **V 38–42: PRIORITY PRACTISED** Jesus commends Mary to overburdened and distracted Martha, and tells her that the most necessary thing is to sit at His feet and listen to what He says. Martha does much that is right but misses the 'one thing' that is 'needed'.³

³ Gerard Chrispin, [*The Bible Panorama: Enjoying the Whole Bible with a Chapter-by-Chapter Guide*](#) (Leominster, UK: Day One Publications, 2005), 434–435.