

At the Feet of Jesus

MARY OF BETHANY

10-Session Series

by

Erilynne Barnum

Study Guide

CALL2DISCIPLE



At The Feet Of Jesus
Mary of Bethany
10-Sessions
STUDY GUIDE
by Erilynne Barnum

Three times Mary is found at the feet of Jesus. Each time we see a woman progressively growing to new levels of faith. Her life is a witness and call for each of us to find ourselves at the feet of Jesus; to enter into a deeper, more intentional relationship with Him; and, to expect to grow stronger in faith and character.

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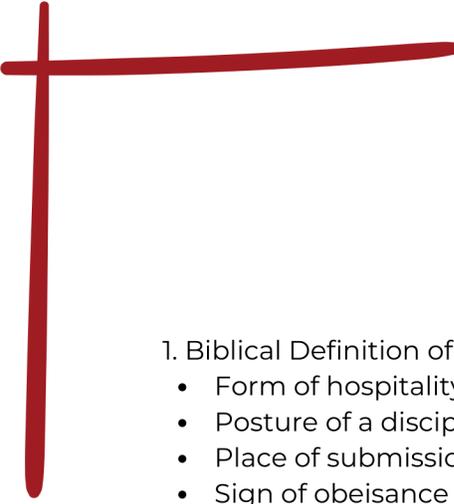
AT THE FEET OF JESUS Mary of Bethany

It is in the life of Mary of Bethany that we hear a deeper call into a more intentional discipleship. Three times she is found at the feet of Jesus, and each time reveals a woman progressively growing to new levels of faith.

We see her at His feet as she carefully listens to His words (Luke 10:38-42); then again in her grief and confusion at her brother Lazarus' death (John 11:28-37); and lastly in an act of revelation and obedience as she anoints the Lord Jesus with costly perfume in preparation for His death and burial (John 12:1-8).

Her life is a model held up by the Lord Jesus Christ as He says that wherever the gospel is preached she will be remembered for what she did. Her life is a message for today's Christian and a call for each of us into a deeper and more intentional discipleship. It's essential we take this step - for the strongest witness to a dying world is a transformed life!

Erilynn Barnum



Session 1

“Choosing the Better Part”

1. Biblical Definition of “at the feet of...”

- Form of hospitality, servanthood - Genesis 18:4, John 13:5
- Posture of a disciple - Acts 22:3
- Place of submission and humility - Mark 5:21-24, Mark 7:25-30
- Sign of obeisance and worship - Matthew 28:9

2. Who is Mary of Bethany?

- The scriptural references - Luke 10:38-42, Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9, Luke 7:36-50, John 12:1-8, John 11:28-37
- Found three times at the feet of Jesus
 - As a learner, a seeker
 - In grief and confusion
 - For worship and adoration

3. Where are we going with this study?

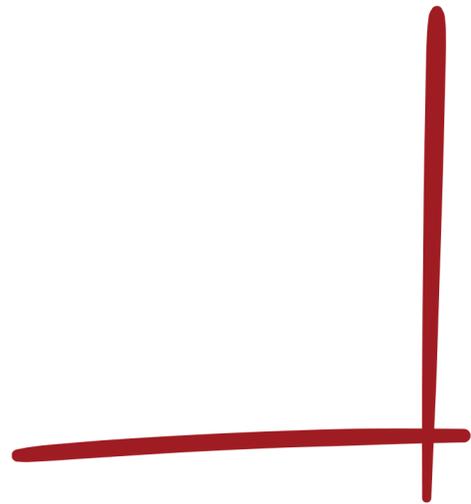
- Discovering a strong model of discipleship - Luke 10:42
 - Answering the call
 - The “one thing” that is necessary
- Following Mary’s lead
 - Moving out of our comfort zone

DISCUSSION:

- How have you perceived Mary of Bethany before now?
- What thoughts and feelings do you have when seeing your self spending time at the feet of Jesus?
- What are your thoughts about Jesus’ words to Martha in Luke 10:41-42?

NEXT SESSION:
Learning at the Feet of Jesus

Read and Journal
Luke 10:38-42 & Philippians 3:7-16





SESSION 2

“Learning at the Feet of Jesus”

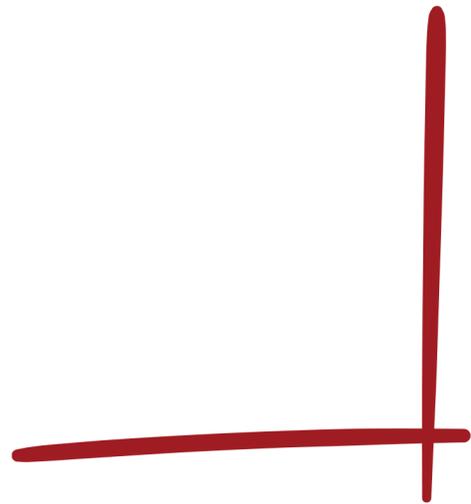
1. Setting the scene..... - Luke 10:38-42
 - Place: Bethany
 - Characters: two sisters and a brother, friends of Jesus
 - What's happening? - Luke 10:39-40
 - a decision is made
 - the beginning of a journey
2. Jesus is Teaching.....
 - Bringing people to know God the Father - John 17:3
 - What prompted Mary to move out of her comfort zone?
3. Priorities are set
 - Jesus invites - Matthew 11:28
 - Martha accuses
 - Jesus rebukes - Luke 10:41
 - A higher calling - Luke 10:42
 - “thinker” or “doer”
4. To know Him - Philippians 3:7-16
 - Knowing
 - Jesus Christ
 - The power of His resurrection
 - The fellowship of sharing in His sufferings
 - Pressing on...
 - “Martha, only one dish is necessary for the meal”
5. Our call today..... - Matthew 11:29-30
 - To learn at the feet of Jesus
 - Choices
 - Priorities - Philippians 3:13

DISCUSSION:

- What is your reaction to Martha's focus? Mary's focus?
- In what ways do you find it difficult to set priorities?
- What kinds of pressures cause you to desert priorities you have made?
- How have you heard Jesus' call to come and be with Him?

NEXT SESSION:
Listening, Struggling, Growing

Read and Journal
Romans 7:7-8:17



SESSION 3

“Listening, Struggling, Growing”

Learning at Jesus' feet / “choices” and “priorities”
“One thing” – to learn, to seek Him, to press on for the higher calling

1. Ears to hear.....

- Biblical definitions
- Hebrew and Greek usage - Deuteronomy 6:3-9
- Effective hearing - Luke 9:28-36
 - And active listening - Acts 3:22-23
- “Open” ears - Isaiah 50:4-5
- Mary is listening - Luke 10:39

2. The Struggle.....

- From hearing to understanding - Luke 6:46-49
- Knowledge brings responsibility - Romans 7:14-20
 - What I want to do
 - What I hate to do
 - Who will rescue me? - Romans 7:24-25
- From understanding to obedience - James 1:2-4

3. God gives the growth.....

- When we are weak... - Romans 8:9-11
- Then we are strong... - 2 Corinthians 12:7-10
- Working out what God works in - Philippians 2:12-13
 - Planting & watering - 1 Corinthians 3:5-17

DISCUSSION:

- Think of some instances when you have “heard” what God was saying but you had difficulty in really “listening” to what it meant for you.
- Talk about some of the struggles you have experienced in your spiritual journey.
- Can you think of a time when you felt truly empowered by the Lord to accomplish what you felt called to do?

NEXT SESSION:
Asking the Hard Questions

Read and Journal
John 6:60-71 & Job 34

SESSION 4

“Asking the Hard Questions”

Listening, Struggling, Growing – what it means to “really” listen and how to embrace the struggle which is necessary, realizing that God gives the growth upon our willingness to “hear and obey.”

1. We ask God.....

- The ear tests words.... - Job 34:3-4
 - Polite conversation with God vs. tribulation and pain of life - Ps. 42:3, 9-10
 - Out of ourselves into serious dialogue - Ps. 13:1-2
- Scripture is full of hard questions
 - Jesus Himself wrestled with His Father - Matthew 27:46, Ps. 22:1

2. God asks us.....

- How shall we answer God? - Job 38:1-3 & Job 40:2, 7
- He desires the dialogue - Malachi 3:6-18
- Motivation of the question
 - “Lord, don't you care that...?” - Luke 10:40
 - For knowledge or for self?

3. Taking a closer look

- Most questions center on God's sovereignty and character
 - “Is God really in control?”
 - “Does He sometimes give Satan control?”
 - “Does God care about major events and choices?”
 - “How could a God of love allow such terrible things to happen?”
- God's character is revealed at the Cross - Rom. 5:1-11
 - Trust issues
- Face to face with the reality of God - Isaiah 46:9-10
- God's pleasure and promise - Luke 12:32

DISCUSSION:

- What kinds of situations test your faith and trust in God the most?
- Can you think of a time when your doubts about God were very real but you were afraid to ask the questions on your heart?
- Why do you think it is that we are so afraid of asking the hard questions of God?

NEXT SESSION:
Weeping at the Feet of Jesus

Read and Journal John 11:1-44

SESSION 5

“Weeping at the Feet of Jesus”

The hard questions.....being honest in our dialogue with the Lord about how we really feel in times of personal trauma and/or loss. Hearing His questions of us and pursuing in faith the real answers.

1. Same woman..... - John 11:1-44

- The sisters call for help
 - 'The one you love'.... - vs.3
- Unexpected response
 - Godly delays - vs.6
 - Inevitable
 - Never final
 - For God's glory - John 9:1-5

2. Same posture.....

- Reactions
 - The Disciples - John 11:7-16, Mark 8:34, Galatians 2:20
 - Martha — 'let's talk' - vs. 20-27
 - Mary — 'at his feet' - vs. 28-32
 - In grief and confusion
 - Even the 'friends'..... - vs. 37
- Jesus weeps - vs. 32-38
 - Deeply moved in spirit
 - Deeply moved once more
 - "Did I not tell you?"..... - vs. 40

3. Different time and place.....

- Turning point in Mary's journey
 - Lessons taught; beliefs tested
 - The bigger picture - Hebrews 2:14-18
- Our 'turning points' - Ephesians 4:17-24
 - From learning, through the struggle, into growth

DISCUSSION:

- Think of times when you felt God's response to your situation as not what you wanted or expected.
- What is your natural reaction to the Lord in times of stress: do you (a) want to reason and talk your way through it, or (b) do you just fling yourself on his mercy and love?
- Talk about your own "turning points" of struggle and faith.

NEXT SESSION:
In the Trenches

Read and Journal Hebrews 3 & 4

SESSION 6

“In the Trenches”

Last week – seeing Mary again at the feet of Jesus but this time in confusion and grief. Seemingly disappointed with Jesus, yet clinging to him in love, this scene seems to be a turning point in Mary’s journey.

Running the race marked out for us..... - Hebrews 12:1-3

1. Let us throw off.....

- Everything that hinders
 - Stripping away
 - “Who is this ‘cutting in’? - Galatians 5:7-10
 - Confusion is not of God - 1 Corinthians 14:33
- The sin that so easily entangles
 - The sin of unbelief - Hebrews 3:12-19
 - Word must be united with faith
 - That which is “easily distracting”
 - Submitting again to slavery - Romans 8:14-18, Galatians 5.1

2. Let us run.....

- God marks out the race - Galatians 1:11-2:2
 - Set apart for a plan and a purpose
- We are commanded to run
 - Run with perseverance - 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Isaiah 40:27-31
 - Participate, contribute, fight - James 1:2-5

3. Let us fix our eyes.....

- Fix your thoughts on Jesus - Hebrews 3:1
 - Focus, personalize it - Romans 12:2
 - Grab it - Philippians 3:12-13
- Spiritual “tunnel” vision - Hebrews 4:14-16

DISCUSSION:

- Talk about the kinds of things that hinder you most in your spiritual journey.
- Think of some of the times in your life when you have experienced confusion – the kind of confusion that kept your thoughts and eyes off the Lord.
- What sorts of things seem to “distract” you more easily than others from your focus on Jesus?

NEXT SESSION:
From Head to Heart

Read and Journal John 4:1-42

SESSION 7

“From Head to Heart”

Through Hebrews 12:1-3 we looked at the race we are all called to run in the light of the reality of our everyday lives. With Mary we are urged to persevere for the joy set before us in Jesus.

1. A woman meets Jesus - John 4:1-42

The Samaritan woman is transformed by the reality of the “here and now Jesus” in her life at that moment.

- Relevance
 - Even when Jesus attempts to take her beyond present experience (i.e. eternal life), He couches it in her terms
 - “Living water”
 - Earthly relationships
- Relationship
 - Jesus clearly is “at ease” with her which frees her to confront her needs
 - Knows her and where she is coming from
 - Deals with her as a person in her own right
- Refusal to be side-tracked
 - She resorts to her “head knowledge”
 - Doesn’t dismiss her invitation to discuss “theology”
 - Doesn’t allow it to deflect the point of conversation
 - Leaves her water jar – new life, new understanding

“He knows me. I am graven on the palms of His hands. I am never out of His mind. All my knowledge of Him depends on His sustained initiative in knowing me. I know Him, because He first knew me, and continues to know me. He knows me as a friend, one who loves me; and there is no moment when His eye is off me, or His attention distracted from me, and no moment therefore, when His care falters. The path to maturity.” *Knowing God*, Dr. J. I. Packer

2. The path to maturity - Hebrews 5:11-14

DISCUSSION:

- Talk about times when intimacy with Jesus has brought conviction and transformation in the way you view your life.
- Think of how the things you are learning about the Lord are becoming connected to your everyday life.
- In what ways has the Lord not allowed you to get “sidetracked” in your journey with Him?

NEXT SESSION:

Worshipping at the Feet of Jesus

Read and Journal Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9 & John 12:1-8

SESSION 8

“Worshipping at the Feet of Jesus”

For Mary, and for us, the understanding of Jesus’ relevance in the here and now, His desire for intimate relationship, and His persistent “refusal-to-be-sidetracked”, calls us to a deeper experience of Jesus in our daily lives.

We again find Mary at the feet of Jesus. All she has heard, learned and struggled through has prepared her for this act of worship and devotion.

1. Seizing the moment...

- A spirit of humility - James 4:10
 - Devotion to Jesus begins at His feet
- A perceptive heart - Matthew 26:12, Mark 14:8, John 12:7
 - Declares herself fully a disciple of Jesus
 - Conveys a crucial message

2. Sharply criticized...

- Misunderstood / an extravagant act
 - Amazingly generous act of devotion - Joshua 22:5
- Jesus defends it
 - “It was intended” – divine purpose - Ephesians. 2:10

3. Sharing the passion...

- A timely act
 - Now is the time to serve Jesus - James 4:13
- A memorial
 - “Wherever this gospel is preached” - Matthew 26:13, Mark 14:9
 - Act of devotion becomes a light to multitudes - 1 Corinthians 15:58

4. Step up; step out...

- Seizing the moment - 1 Peter 3:15
- Withstanding the pressure share in His glory - 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15

DISCUSSION:

- Share times in your life when you have felt overcome with a sense of love and devotion to the Lord. How did you express it?
- Think about times when your service to the Lord has been misunderstood, or has brought undue criticism. How did you handle it?
- When and how has the Holy Spirit enabled you to stand firm for Jesus?

NEXT SESSION:
A Women After God’s Heart

Read and Journal the book of Ruth

SESSION 9

“A Woman After God’s Heart”

Mary declares herself fully a disciple of Jesus Christ by falling a third time at His feet in worship and devotion. In anointing the Lord with costly perfume, by preparing His body for burial, she shares in His suffering and says “yes” to the cross.

Mary is a link in the chain of many biblical women who stand out as examples of what it means to follow the Lord God in integrity and strength. One of these is Ruth of the Old Testament, who exhibits the same characteristics we see in Mary of Bethany.

1. She knew her need... - Ruth 1:14-18

- Turned away from her former ‘gods’ - Ruth 1:15 & 2:11, Matthew 19:27-30
- Wanted to know Naomi’s God - Ruth 1:16, John 12:20-22
- Determined to pursue the truth - Ruth 1:18

2. Presented herself... - Ruth 2

- Knows there is redemption for her and Naomi - Ruth 2:2-12
- The invitation is given - Ruth 2:14, 2 Sam. 9 & Matthew 11:25-30
- Finds herself at Boaz’s feet - Ruth 3:6-18

3. “It was intended...” (John 12:7) Ruth 4

- Finds the redemption she seeks - 4:9-10
- Says “yes” to God’s ways - 4:13-15
- Used of God to bring blessing and redemption - 4:16-22

4. Where are we?

- Are we saying “yes”? - Luke 1:38
- Are we “at Jesus’ feet”?

DISCUSSION:

- Reflect on the time you personally responded to Jesus’ invitation to receive Him as savior and redeemer?
- How are you responding to His continuing invitation “to be with Him where He is”?
- Talk about the times you find yourself at the Lord’s feet; or know you should be and for some reason resist.

NEXT SESSION:
Serving in Power

Read and Journal 1 Samuel 25 & Luke 10:38-42

SESSION 10

“Serving in Power”

The story of Ruth gives us insight into the characteristics that are evident in this authentic woman of God. These same attributes are exhibited by Mary of Bethany, therefore helping us to more easily understand the depth of her relationship with Jesus.

Abigail, a woman who became the wife of King David, steps up and steps out with initiative and respect, revealing her servant heart, thereby strengthening David and averting the destruction of her whole household.

1. Discernment -- a trustworthy woman....

- Well known to the servants for her wisdom - 1 Samuel 25:14-17
 - She discerns the immediate need - vs.18
 - She has courage and uses common sense - vs.20
- Mary – sits at the feet of Jesus as a disciple*

2. Submission -- the heart of a servant....

- Submits to David
 - Falls at his feet - vss.23-25
 - Takes the blame and seeks forgiveness - vss.24 & 27-28
 - Submits to her husband
 - Knows him well - vss.36-37
 - Treats him with respect
- Mary – falls at Jesus' feet in submission and love*

3. Servanthood – ultimate goal, the good of others....

- For David and his men
 - tends to their immediate need – provision - vs.18
 - For her husband and her household
 - pleads for their lives - vss. 26-31
- Mary – serves Jesus in power by anointing His body*

4. Which is it then, Mary or Martha???

- Jesus' words to Martha reveal the true need - Luke 10:41-42
- The call is to sit at His feet AND to serve in power for which Mary was remembered - Ps. 37:3-6

DISCUSSION:

- When do you most often invoke the image of Martha as an excuse for not living in the intimacy of being at Jesus' feet?
- In what ways are you beginning to make the Mary-choice for the “better part” in your everyday life?
- Jesus said of Mary that she would be remembered in the preaching of the gospel – in what ways do you think we'll be remembered if we live the Mary-life?