

## Equipped to win over worry

Implicit personality theory refers to the assumption that, if someone possesses a particular personality trait, they're likely to have other features that correspond with this. For example, you might expect someone who is a worrier to be quiet, nervous and introspective. In some ways, therefore, it comes as a surprise to read in Luke 10 that Martha of Bethany, with her practical, take-charge personality, showed she was also capable of worrying.

Her words to Jesus in verse 40 don't immediately come across as those of a worried woman. They sound more like someone complaining about perceived injustice. But Jesus, as always, delves beneath the outward appearance and tells it as it is. "*Martha, Martha... you are worried and upset about many things...*"<sup>1</sup> Could this be said of you?

Worry is not the same as legitimate concern. Concern can be productive if it is solution-focused and drives us to take corrective action on behalf of ourselves or someone else. But worry is concern that's got out of control. The word *worry* encompasses the idea of being pulled in different directions. Verse 40 conveys this by describing Martha as "*distracted*". Her mind was on other things - "*all the preparations that had to be made*" - which impaired her ability to effectively focus on what was really important.

There was no doubt about it, Martha was doing something good and admirable - she was serving her Lord - but perhaps her priorities were out of balance. Her example shows us that doing something *for* Him is secondary to spending time *with* Him. None of us can be expected to worship instead of work, but we do need to be reminded to worship before work. This inversion of priorities might have been Martha's problem because Jesus' response is to direct her attention to what Mary was doing by sitting at His feet - worshipping. It's not a case of being either a Mary or a Martha - worshipping or working - but in which order.

Worry can cause us to momentarily lose sight of the big picture. It distorts our view of life and sometimes of God Himself. Like Martha, it might lead us to question His love and concern for us: "*Lord, don't you care...?*" Other times, worry can drive us to make demands of God: "*Tell her to help me!*"<sup>2</sup> Do you sometimes think other people are the source of your problems and you imagine you need to tell God what to do? If this sounds like you, try inserting your own name in place of Martha's<sup>3</sup> and delight in the fact that He knows you and calls you by name.

Martha is often presented as a flustered hostess and, on this occasion, she probably was. However, later on, following the death of her brother, Lazarus, she shows herself to be an astute theologian. No longer distracted in service, she addresses Jesus and confidently proclaims that he is the Christ, the Son of God.<sup>4</sup> What brought about this dramatic change? More than likely, she had heeded Jesus' directive<sup>5</sup> by prioritizing her work and worship. No one could make such a profound statement of belief without having taken the time to listen to what Jesus had been teaching about Himself. Listening to God is as much part of worship as is praise and adoration.

Some of us, partly because of our personalities, are prone to worry more than others. Yet, for Martha, this was no personality issue, but a faith issue. We read in the bible that "*faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ*".<sup>6</sup> Hearing the words of Christ through worship appears to have gone a long way in helping Martha win over worry. The same can be true for us, too!

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 10:41

<sup>2</sup> verse 40

<sup>3</sup> verse 41

<sup>4</sup> John 11:27

<sup>5</sup> Luke 10:42

<sup>6</sup> Romans 10:17