

Martha and Mary (Core Leaders Notes: 9-14 Year Olds)

Basis: Jesus Visits Martha and Mary from Luke 10:38-42

Key Questions: "What distracts us from spending time with Jesus? What was Martha putting in front of her time with Him? How can we avoid making the same mistake?"

Equipment Needed:**From Your Settings' Stock:**

Bibles
Paper (Lined)
Biros

Supplied in the Box:

Feathers

Sections 1-3 which are designed to precede the Explore + time are reproduced on the Welcome Card inside your BalloonBox. Section 4 is on the Core Leaders Notes sheet. If your Explore + group does not take part in the Teaching part of the session with the other children, your group should begin the 'Into the Word' section of these notes by reading the Bible passage listed above and allowing the children to reflect on it briefly.

5. Explore +

"Introduction Activity" and "Introductory Discussion" sections are optional depending on how much time you have. Main content begins at "Into the Word".

Introduction Activity: Totally Distracted

Ask if anyone in the group is ticklish and invite them to volunteer for a challenge. Set them a passage to read from the Bible while people are given the feathers and allowed to start to tickle them as they read, adding more people and feathers in as they go. Work with what your group members are comfortable with – if the challenger is happy to remove their shoes so their feet can be tickled, for their chin to be tickled, etc.

Reflect together on how easy/difficult it was to stay focussed.

Introductory Discussion: Staying Focussed

- Are they the sort of people who get distracted really easy? What tasks/jobs do they find themselves getting distracted from the easiest?
- Do they have any particular strategies that they use to stay focussed when they have something to do that really needs to be completed? What sorts of things do they do?
- Do they find it easy to spend time focussing on 'God stuff' (e.g., reading the Bible, praying, things that go on in church, etc.) or is that time where it is easy to get distracted? Why?

Into the Word: Distracted by the Right Things

Explain to the group that while it is easy in many ways to explore the things that God does *not* want us to be doing and are therefore a distraction from following Him, it is far more challenging to see when things are not intrinsically bad or wrong but can still be getting in the way of our relationship with Him. Give the example of *stealing – time spent on this is never OK!*

Read the account of Jesus visiting Martha and Mary's home from Luke 10:38-42

- What is Mary criticised for in this account of what happened that day?
- What is Martha criticised for by Jesus?
- Who do you think was in the right – Martha, Mary or Jesus? Explore whether they most identify with Martha or Mary. Do they feel like Jesus was being fair? What was the point He was trying to illustrate to them?

- What Martha was doing was not wrong in itself – she had guests and needed to care for them. So why did Jesus criticise her? *She was putting serving the guests over being with the guests – she was more concerned with how things appeared than actually being with the Son of God who had come to visit her.*

Discuss with the group what would be an example of something that in itself is not bad, or is actually a positive thing, which they know that they often give priority to over other things. *This could be spending time with friends, gaming, homework... none of those are 'bad' and actually they can be quite positive, but if we let them take precedence over other things they can become a hinderance to us. Have they ever had a gaming session that lasted so long they forgot to eat? Or been out with friends and missed a homework deadline?*

What would be the modern equivalent for us today of the Martha and Mary situation? How can we make sure that we are spending time just in Jesus' presence rather than being overtaken by all the other draws on our time? *Land the discussion on specific examples to all of the young people who are present. What are the things they do which would steal away time and energy they could be spending on relating to Jesus?*

Affirm the group in the fact what is being discussed is difficult to achieve and will be a battle they will fight, and a discipline they will build up, throughout their lives. Read Romans 12:1-3 to conclude and discuss:

- What does Paul (who wrote the letter to the first Christians in Rome) suggest will allow us to achieve what we have been discussing today? *He talks about being completely transformed – we have to turn the values which the world gives us completely upside down.*
- What encouragement does Paul give us if we do start to work with this? *We get to discover who God designed us to be... Jesus challenged Martha because she was concerned with what she did rather than building who she was. By spending time focussing on our relationship with God, we get to explore who He designed us to be and then start to live that design out; if we edge Him out we could miss out on experiencing all the fullness of the plans and purposes He has for us.*
- What reminder does Paul give to us in verse 3? *To never think we've made it – what we have discussed today is a life long journey that will never be complete until we are with Jesus in heaven and can sit at His feet (like Mary did) for all eternity. As we grow up, there will be the pressures of work, bills, marriages and children to battle through, but if we can establish the 'transformation' that Paul wrote about now, those things will be so much easier because we prioritise Jesus first and come to them second.*

Application: Loricis

Chat together about:

- Has anyone heard of St. Patrick? *Many people will be familiar with St. Patrick's day celebrations, where people all over the world celebrate his life. He was a Christian a long time ago who knew all about this idea of putting Jesus first above everything else.*
- Lots of the things that Patrick wrote or did all those hundreds of years ago are really helpful even today. One of his most famous writings was called a 'Lorica' – a special prayer of protection that he would say every day to remind himself that whatever happened, Jesus, and being transformed by Him into the person He designed Patrick to be, was his top priority (extract below).

*Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks of me,
Christ in the eye that sees me,
Christ in the ear that hears me.*

Help the children to create their own Lorica prayer, either written or drawn, reflecting that in all the parts of their life now and in the future, they will try to put Jesus first. They could draw scenes from an average day and place Jesus into them, etc., and then use it each day the way that Patrick did as a way to ensure they are putting Christ first ahead of all their other priorities.