

# Coach House Church

# BEACONS

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## DINNER GUESTS

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2ND FEBRUARY 2021

Do you remember that feeling, when you expect guests for dinner? It seems like a life time ago since we last had people in the house gathered around food or since we were able to chat with new acquaintances or catch up with friends in person.

When I know that people are about to come over, on top of feeling excited and happy, I also feel a little nervous: What if the food I cooked is not to my guests taste, what if someone forgot to tell me that they don't eat garlic - I love garlic! Have I cooked enough food, does it look appetising? All these questions and thoughts are going through my head.

Food brings people together and showing hospitality is important to many cultures all around the world. Traditions around food and meal times are different and colourful. For example; in oriental culture burping at the dinner table is a way of telling the host that his guest is enjoying his meal - it is seen as a compliment. In some Asian communities, if you finish everything on your plate it indicates to the host that you did not have enough to eat and would like some more food.

In some of the world cultures hospitality is a social requirement. This was the case within the Jewish culture during Jesus' time here on earth. The Jewish culture required people to show kindness by showing hospitality to strangers and travellers.

A family that got to be well known for their hospitality during Jesus' life was found in Bethany and they were three siblings: Martha, Mary and Lazarus. The bible tells us that they were friends with Jesus and often shared food with him and his disciples.

I am sure it was not an easy task back then to have 13 people for dinner. People had to cook everything from scratch and on top of that they had no fridge! Possibly this family were one of the better off so they had servants to help with

housework and chores. If so, these staff would still have had to be managed and had their tasks supervised. Let's read the account in Luke 10:

"As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Luke 10:38-42 NIV.

In Luke's account, the brother of Mary and Martha is not mentioned but John, in his account, tells us about the family from a different perspective and paints a more detailed picture of the friendship between Jesus and the three siblings. John tells us that Mary poured perfume on Jesus' feet and whipped it with her hair whilst he was reclining at a dinner party given in his honour.

Today I would like us to zoom in on Martha's character to see what we could learn from her. She complains to Jesus that her sister is not helping out in the house and this makes Martha look like a demanding older sister; it puts her in a negative light. Whereas we see from what Mary does that she prefers to sit at Jesus' feet and listen quietly performing acts of worship.

Martha comes with demands to Jesus—"tell her to help me". She wants her sister to have the same priorities. With all this I believe Martha's heart is in the right place: she wants to serve and she wants to serve well. And, she wants to please and do the right thing. Probably as the older sister she feels responsible for the guests of her family. She would not want her family to be embarrassed for offering an inadequate meal. She paid attention to details. Everything had to be just right!

It's not wrong to want to do things properly and to the best of your ability. However, when having dinner guests, your attention should be on the guests above all. Jesus told Martha that Mary chose the better path because Mary chose to spend her time listening to Jesus and give him her undivided attention. I guess what I am trying to point out is the fact that whilst serving, Martha got lost in details. She paid too much attention to "how", "where" and "what" and not enough attention was given to "who".

So what could we learn from Martha? Maybe you can think of many other things, but for me two things stand out:

1- getting lost in details can make us forget the main reason for our actions .

And

2- there are times when we have to listen to Jesus and there are other times when we have to serve him.

Lord Jesus I pray that you would help us to know when to listen and when to serve. Give us the ability to understand the road you are taking us on and give us the willingness to follow you. Help us to hear your directions

Amen



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