

“Worried and upset about many things”

We are offering a series of reflections for individuals and churches who may be finding it difficult to provide midweek prayer and shared learning from Scripture. You can use these by watching the YouTube video, reading the relevant Bible passage and then reflecting on the questions below. To help make this a shared activity, you are encouraged to reflect on this together with friends using an online conference package, or simply arrange with a friend for them to watch it too. Then ring each other up, share your thoughts and responses and then pray for one another, and pray together for our world.

Read Luke 10:38-42

If you can, watch the YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/i6D0YUWNogM>

For all that the Gospels introduce us to the “big story” of God becoming one of us, they also include many deeply personal and ordinary encounters. The story of Martha, bringing to Jesus her frustration with her sister Mary, is one such episode – reminding us that God can be part and parcel of our everyday experience. It also reminds us how, in circumstances like those we face at present, we can easily become “worried and upset about many things”. As you reflect on this story, three questions you might consider:

What’s bothering me at the moment?

Reflect on this in the light of Martha’s conversation with Jesus. He recognises that her outburst was the culmination of all she was bothered and concerned about. Jesus invited Martha to consider whether she needed to be defined by those things at all. Her version of “necessary” was very different to Jesus’. As you acknowledge your own anxieties – the question you might bring to the heart of your prayers is “show me what’s really necessary”. Consider what or who is generating your anxieties. Who says these things are necessary? Is there stuff you need to let go of? What are the “few things” that really matter?

What or who have I taken that out on?

Jesus knew a lot about human nature – how often do we end up flying off at someone or something, as the culmination of “many things” We are all under a huge amount of pressure at the moment and are being bombarded by narratives that build and build that anxiety. We need to guard our relationships against becoming the victim of that – we need to be honest with ourselves and maybe be even more prepared to do some bridge building when we know we’ve fallen into that trap. Maybe we also need to acknowledge that others have been under the same pressure if we’ve been on the receiving end of some of that.

How am I praying at the moment?

Reflect for a moment on the irony of the situation – Martha comes to Jesus and tells him what to do because someone else is listening to what he has to say! In the Roman Catholic tradition, prayer is described as “lifting up our hearts and minds to God.” It’s all too easy for our prayers to sound like Martha’s – rising from our own distractions and frustrations they become a catalogue of my expectations. “Mary has chosen a better thing” says Jesus – perhaps the fact that we can’t distract ourselves with our usual religious chores provides the chance of a lifetime to explore those “better things.” How and when are we taking the time to sit at Jesus feet, to listen to what he has to say?

PRAYER

Ever-present God, we come to you with the worries and frustrations that our current circumstances have created. Thank you that we do not need to hide them away from you, but help us by your Spirit to learn to recognise what truly matters, and to release to you those things that do not. Help us to learn from you, to sit at your feet, and not allow your voice to be drowned by the narratives of our own agendas and expectations. For all the struggles that we currently face, help us to find our way through these challenging times with lives that are centred on you. In the name of Jesus we pray – AMEN.