

## MARTHA, CAN YOU BELIEVE?

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In John chapter 11 Jesus states to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" This question is in the context of one of the darkest moments of Martha's life. Her brother has died and seemingly for nothing. The conversation she has with Jesus sheds light on some dynamics that, if allowed to be developed with God's help, will aid us in creating an atmosphere in which people will risk believing in God as their Savior. \_\_

The dynamics reveal these steps: 1. Know whom it is you answer to (Christ). 2. Trust His commitment to relationship. 3. Allow for grief. 4. Rehearse what is true. 5. Make the choice.

Jesus purposefully waited two days before he went to where Martha and her brother lived. He states to His disciples that this illness is for the glory of God. Earlier in John chapter 9 He tells those around Him. "I must work the works of Him who sent me." Jesus never lost sight of the larger picture. That picture was preparing the way for people to be reconciled in their hearts with Him. Everything He did and said focused on attaching with their heart process. This process was His mandate from the father.

Martha goes out to meet Jesus as He approaches. They had a trust level in the commitment to the relationship with one another. It is reported that Jesus spent many days in the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. She trusted Him or she would not have gone out to meet him. Can people trust your commitment to staying in relationship with them? Do you find yourself cutting off or becoming defensive and blaming when things feel off?

What happens next is precious as it reveals the grief she felt in regard to her loss and disillusionment with the seeming shift in the Lord towards her family. She is approaching him much as any of us would - "If you had been here my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you." She challenges even hints at what He could do to 'correct' the situation. Instead the Lord speaks compassionate truth to her. In our culture, it appears to be difficult for us to remain in a compassionate, steady place when dealing with long-term grief. This originates in the Garden of Eden. Adam, instead of remaining steady in His position of leadership, abdicates his role. To cover His sin he blames Eve and even God. Male or female, when we blame, refuse to take responsibility for our part, or even think "I couldn't possibly be that carnal," we abandon one another and any potential for attachment/restoration is missed.

God's willingness to remain steady, not respond to her accusations and hints at what he should do, creates an atmosphere in which Martha begins to relax and risk attaching once again to the Lord. You see, these dark times for us are crucial in that we remain

attached to He who is Truth or we turn away from the Lord in our loss. Martha begins rehearsing what she knows to be true. We must allow ourselves to remember what and how God has come through for us in the past. We must allow ourselves to rehearse His promises. Life teaches us things that are not always true. In the face of what is true about Him is where we dare to believe differently.

The choice Martha makes to believe comes after God reveals His heart to her. She has allowed herself to remember. God has made a statement about whom He is and His behavior has shown His love for her. She pauses...studying His face...then makes the choice. I have a theory. When people feel loved, when people feel like who they are is more important than their performance, they have the ability to risk trying again.

Do those around you experience the love of God in this manner? The challenge is both to us and in our behavior towards others. Remember whom it is you answer to. Remain steady in the knowledge of His commitment to you no matter what you are faced with in your relationships. Allow for grief to be present. Rehearse what you know to be true. Risk believing He is who He says He is. Believing means you will allow the reality of whom He is to be "absolutely confirmed" in your heart. Know that God will never stop pursuing your heart. The question still remains: Can You Believe It?

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