Mary and Martha

Bible Verse
This is how God is revealed to us; God has sent his only Son into the world so that we can live through him. (1 John 4:9)

Bible Story
Luke 10:38-42

Leap of Faith
Jesus shows me God’s love.

Before You Begin
Today’s Bible story tells about Jesus’ visit to the home of two sisters named Martha and Mary. Martha and Mary lived in Bethany, a village just east of Jerusalem. This is not the only time Jesus visits their home. On a subsequent visit to Mary and Martha, Jesus raises their brother, Lazarus, from the dead.

When Jesus arrived, “Martha welcomed him as a guest” (10:38). At that time, there were societal and cultural rules of hospitality that seem strange to us today. If travelers arrived at your house, you were expected to extend hospitality to them whether you knew them or not. This hospitality included providing food and a place to sleep. For Martha, the arrival of Jesus and his disciples meant that food needed to be prepared, so she went about the business of getting ready.

Earlier in the Gospel of Luke, we hear of Jesus’ commissioning of his disciples (9:1-6) and then seventy-two other followers (10:1-12). Jesus sent his followers out to preach about God’s kingdom with instructions to stay in homes where they were welcomed. “Don’t move from house to house. Whenever you enter a city and its people welcome you, eat what they set before you” (Luke 10:7-8). In stopping at a house where he is welcomed by Martha and offered a meal, Jesus is following the journey instructions he gave his followers.

The trouble begins when Martha notices that her sister, Mary, isn’t helping her welcome their guests. Instead, Mary is sitting at Jesus’ feet and listening to Jesus teach. To understand the gravity of Martha’s complaint, we must again consider the cultural norms of the time. Seated at the feet of a teacher was a place for male disciples. This was not considered a place for women. According to societal rules, Mary should have been helping her sister.

It’s clear that Martha expects Jesus to take her side when she complains to him about Mary not helping her. Instead, Jesus gently chides Martha for being distracted and tells her, “Mary has chosen the better part” (10:42). Jesus’ response affirms the place of women among his followers, a theme repeatedly seen throughout his ministry. Additionally, Jesus emphasizes the importance of listening to God’s Word. There are many examples in Jesus’ teaching that recognize the importance of doing good and helping others. In this story, Jesus reminds Martha, and us, that taking time to listen to God is equally important.
Explore Interest Groups

The following activities are planned as interest groups to introduce today's theme. Be sure that there is at least one adult leader to welcome the children and direct them to the interest groups of their choice. An adult will be needed at each interest group to lead the activity and interact with the children.

Make Listening Ears (Drama Activity)

Supplies: Reproducible 8a, scissors, chenille stems (two per child), tape, crayons or markers

Encourage each child to make and wear Listening Ears.

- Photocopy and cut out the two ovals, “Ears” (Reproducible 8a), for each child.
- Give each child a copy of the two ears. Encourage the children to decorate the ears with crayons or markers.
- Give each child two chenille stems. Lay the ears face-down across from each other, with the “lobes” pointing out to the left and right. Help the child tape each end of the first chenille stem to the inside top of each ear (near an ear “side”). Have the child repeat this with the second chenille stem (near the other ear “side”).
- Bend the chenille stems over the child’s head. The ears should resemble earmuffs.

SAY: Today our Bible story is about Jesus and two sisters. The two sisters learn that it is important to listen. Let’s wear our Listening Ears.

Use Your Ears (Science Activity)

Supplies: Listening Ears made previously (see above activity)

- Encourage the children to wear their Listening Ears.

SAY: Today our Bible story is about Jesus and two sisters. The two sisters learn that it is important to listen. Let’s do a science experiment that uses our Listening Ears.

ASK: Do you think your hearing is better when you listen with both ears or with one ear? Let’s find out.

- Have the children stand in a circle.
- Invite one child to be “IT.” Have IT stand in the middle of the circle and close his or her eyes.
- Quietly go to one child in the circle and have that child clap his or her hands.
- Let IT point to where he or she thinks the sound is coming from.
- Have IT open his or her eyes and discover who was clapping.
- Have IT close his or her eyes again. Plus, have IT cover one ear with a hand.
- Repeat the experiment with IT covering one ear.

ASK: Was it easier to hear with one ear or two ears?

- Give everyone an opportunity to be IT.
SAY: When you hear a sound, your ears quickly tell your brain. If your right ear hears the sound before the left ear, then your brain knows that the sound you heard is on the right. When you cover one ear, your ears can’t tell your brain as much information, so your brain has a harder time knowing where the sound is coming from.

**Listen and Paint (Art Activity)**

**Supplies:** CD-ROM; CD player; Listening Ears made earlier (p. 80); paper; table; washable paint, paintbrushes, smocks, plastic containers for paint, table covering—or- crayons and markers

- Cover the table with paper or plastic.
- Encourage the children to wear their Listening Ears.

SAY: Today our Bible story is about Jesus and two sisters. The two sisters learn that it is important to listen. Let’s use our Listening Ears to listen to music and then paint the way the music makes us feel.

- Play “One Heart at a Time” (CD-ROM) for a few minutes.

ASK: How does this music make you feel?

SAY: Paint as you listen to this (say whatever feeling the children named) song.

- Then play the instrumental music for “Come to Us, Emmanuel.”

SAY: This music has a different sound.

ASK: How does this music make you feel?

SAY: Paint as you listen to this (say whatever feeling the children named) song.

**Story Blocks (Manipulative Activity)**

**Supplies:** Reproducibles 5e and 7b, tape, building blocks

- Photocopy and cut out “Story Blocks.” Today you will need the figures of Jesus (Reproducible 5e), Mary, and Martha (Reproducible 7b). Tape each figure onto a block.
- Place the story blocks on the rug or on a table along with other building blocks.

SAY: Today our Bible story is about Jesus and two sisters. One day Jesus went to the house of some friends.

- Encourage the children to build a house out of the blocks.
- Place the Jesus story block by the house.

SAY: Jesus was glad to see his friends, including two sisters named Mary and Martha.

- Place the Mary story block and the Martha story block near the house.

SAY: Mary immediately sat down and listened to Jesus talking to his friends.

- Place Mary next to Jesus.

SAY: Martha immediately began cooking and cleaning. She was very busy.

- Move Martha story to several places around the block house.
SAY: Mary just kept sitting and listening. Martha was upset that Mary was just sitting and listening to Jesus. Martha wanted Mary to help her cook and clean. “Jesus,” said Martha, “tell Mary to help me!” “Martha,” said Jesus, “Mary made a good choice. I want my friends to listen to me.”

• Place Martha next to Jesus.

SAY: So Martha stopped cooking and cleaning, and sat down to listen to Jesus.

Large Group

Bring the children together to experience the Bible story and worship. Use a bell to alert the children that it is Large Group Time.

Jesus Is the Son of God (Transition Activity)

• Have the children line up behind you. Lead the children in marching around the room as you sing the song, “Jesus Is the Son of God,” to the tune of “Merrily We Roll Along” (below).

Jesus came to show God’s love,
show God’s love, show God’s love.
Jesus came to show God’s love,
he is the Son of God.

• Have the children sit down in your large group area.

Visit Leaper’s Pointe

Supplies: DVD, DVD player, computer, television or projector and screen

• Play the theme song from Leaper’s Pointe in Concert, “Talkin’ ‘bout Faith” (DVD). Encourage the children to sign the word faith (see at right).

SAY: Gabby and the mayor are helping Papa B with story time, but it looks like the mayor is doing all the work while Gabby just sits listening to the story. Let’s watch.

• Show the children the Leaper’s Pointe video (DVD), and encourage the children to do the motions with Papa B.

Moving With the Bible Story

Supplies: Bible, Leader’s Guide—p. 86

SAY: Today our Bible story is about Jesus and two sisters. The story is found in the New Testament.

• Show the children the Bible open to Luke.

• Tell the children the story, “Mary and Martha” (Leader’s Guide—p. 86). When you read Martha’s part, sound hurried and breathless. When you read Mary’s part, sound calm. Encourage the children to do the motions with you.

ASK: What did Martha do when Jesus came to visit? (cook and clean) What did Mary do when Jesus came to visit? (sit and listen to Jesus) What did Jesus think was more important, cooking and cleaning or listening? (listening)
Learn the Bible Verse

Supplies: CD-ROM, computer, printer, projector and screen

- Print the Bible Verse Poster (January—Unit 2—CD-ROM) and display it in your large group area.

- Show the children how to sign the words God, sent, Son, and world, using signs from American Sign Language (Graphic 5a—CD-ROM).

- Say the whole verse for the children. Then have the children repeat, “God has sent his only Son into the world.”

- Encourage the children to sign the words as they say the phrase from the Bible verse, “God has sent his only Son into the world” (1 John 4:9).

Worship

Supplies: DVD, DVD player, television or projector and screen

- Play the song, “One Heart at a Time” (DVD). Encourage the children to sign the words one, heart, and time in American Sign Language.

- Say the Bible verse again. Encourage the children to sign along with the verse, “God has sent his only Son into the world” (1 John 4:9).

- Say the following litany with the children. Encourage the children to sign and say the Bible verse with you.

  Leader: Jesus came to show us God’s love.
  Leader and Children: “God has sent his only Son into the world” (1 John 4:9).
  Leader: Jesus made a little girl well.
  Leader and Children: “God has sent his only Son into the world” (1 John 4:9).
  Leader: Jesus met a woman at a well.
  Leader and Children: “God has sent his only Son into the world” (1 John 4:9).
  Leader: Jesus told the woman about God’s love.
  Leader and Children: “God has sent his only Son into the world” (1 John 4:9).
  Leader: Jesus healed ten men with a skin disease.
  Leader and Children: “God has sent his only Son into the world” (1 John 4:9).
  Leader: Jesus visited with two sisters.
  Leader and Children: “God has sent his only Son into the world” (1 John 4:9).

  PRAY: God, thank you for Jesus. Amen.

- Dismiss the children to their small groups.
Small Groups

Divide the children into small groups based on age levels. Keep the groups small, with a maximum of ten children in each group. You may need to have more than one of each group.

Ages 3–4 Small Group

Supplies: Listening Ears made earlier (p. 80); dust cloths or feather dusters; child-size broom or whisk broom; napkins; Bible-times foods such as grapes, olives, and cheese; hand-washing supplies

Wash grapes. Cut cheese into small pieces or squares.

**SAY:** Today our Bible story is about Jesus and two sisters. Jesus visited the home of two sisters named Mary and Martha. When Jesus came, Martha immediately started cooking and cleaning. Let's pretend to be Martha and get our room ready for snack time.

- Let some of the children use the dust cloths or dusters to clean the tables and shelves in your small group area. Let other children use the brooms to sweep the floor. Let still other children help you set out the food and napkins you have provided.

- While the children are still working, say, “Stop!”

**SAY:** Martha was so busy cooking and cleaning that she did not take the time to listen to Jesus.

- Have the children put away the cleaning supplies, wash their hands, and sit down. Finish handing out the Bible-times food.

**SAY:** Mary knew it was important to listen to Jesus. She sat down beside Jesus and listened to Jesus tell about God’s love.

- Have all the children sit down.

- Enjoy sharing the Bible-times foods. Let the children know that these are foods people ate in Bible times. Jesus might have eaten grapes, olives, and cheese when he was at Mary and Martha’s house.

**SAY:** Let’s stop and be quiet for a minute.

- Have the children take a deep breath.

**SAY:** It’s important to stop and listen to stories and Bible verses about Jesus.

- Encourage the children to wear their Listening Ears.

- Sing the song, “Put On Your Listening Ears,” to the tune of “The Farmer in the Dell.” The words are printed in the column on the right.

**SAY:** Listen to our Bible verse about Jesus.

- Say the full Bible verse, “This is how the love of God is revealed to us: God has sent his only Son into the world so that we can live through him” (1 John 4:9). Have the children repeat the middle part of the verse after you: “God has sent his only Son into the world.”

**PRAY:** Thank you, God, for Jesus. Amen.

Always check for food allergies before serving food to your children.

Put On Your Listening Ears

(Tune: The Farmer in the Dell)

Put on your listening ears, put on your listening ears to hear the stories Jesus tells; put on your listening ears.
Ages 5–6 Small Group

Supplies: Listening Ears made earlier (p. 80); dust cloths or feather dusters; child-size broom or whisk broom; napkins; Bible-times foods such as grapes, olives, and cheese; hand-washing supplies

- Wash grapes. Cut cheese into small pieces or squares.
- Have the children stand in a circle in an area of the room.

**SAY:** Today our Bible story is about Jesus and two sisters. One sister was named Mary and one sister was named Martha. One day Jesus came to Mary and Martha’s house to visit. Martha immediately started cooking and cleaning so that everything was ready for Jesus. Let’s pretend that we’re helping Martha clean the house. We’re going to sweep the floor.

- Choose a child to be “IT.” Have IT stand in the center of the circle. Give IT the broom. Have IT sweep while you and the other children walk around the circle and sing, “This Is the Way” (printed in the column on the right).
- Give each child the opportunity to be IT.

**SAY:** Mary knew it was important to listen to Jesus. She sat down beside Jesus and listened to Jesus tell about God’s love.

- Have all the children wash their hands and then sit down.
- Give each child a napkin.
- Show the children the Bible-times foods.

**SAY:** These are foods people ate in Bible times. Jesus might have eaten grapes, olives, and cheese when he was at Mary and Martha’s house.

- Let the children choose the foods they would like to try. Enjoy sharing the Bible-times foods.

**ASK:** What stories have we heard about Jesus? (Jesus’ birth, Jesus loves the children, Jesus healing a little girl who was sick, Jesus and the woman at the well, Jesus healing ten lepers)

**SAY:** In each of those stories, Jesus showed us that God loves and cares for us. Let’s stop and be quiet for a minute.

- Have the children take a deep breath.

**SAY:** It’s important to stop and listen to stories and Bible verses about Jesus.

- Encourage the children to wear their Listening Ears.
- Sing the song, “Put On Your Listening Ears,” to the tune of “The Farmer in the Dell.” The words are printed in the column on the right.

**SAY:** Listen to our Bible verse about Jesus.

- Say the full Bible verse, “This is how the love of God is revealed to us: God has sent his only Son into the world so that we can live through him” (1 John 4:9). Have the children repeat the middle part of the verse after you: “God has sent his only Son into the world.”

**PRAY:** Thank you, God, for Jesus. Amen.
Mary and Martha

“Jesus is coming to our house!” said Martha to her sister Mary. “It’s important to have everything ready.”

“I can’t wait for Jesus to come,” said Mary. “I love listening to him tell about God.”

“First I must sweep the floor,” said Martha. Sweep, sweep, sweep. (Pretend to sweep the floor.)

Mary stood at the door, waiting for Jesus.

“Then I must wipe off the table,” said Martha. Wipe, wipe, wipe. (Pretend to wipe off a table.)

“He’s here!,” said Mary. “Jesus is here!”

“Welcome to our house,” said Martha.

Jesus came into the house. He sat down and smiled at his friends. Jesus was glad to be at Mary and Martha’s house.

“Now I must stir the stew,” said Martha. Stir, stir, stir. (Pretend to stir a pot.)

Mary sat down beside Jesus. She listened as he began to talk about God.

“Next I must put cups on the table,” said Martha. Clink, clink, clink. (Pretend to put cups on the table.)

“And pour the drink and get the bread and get the grapes and get the cheese and set out the olives AND…Mary isn’t helping!”

“Jesus,” said Martha, “I’m busy getting everything ready for dinner and Mary isn’t helping. She’s just sitting there listening to you. Tell her to get up and help me.”

Jesus smiled gently at Martha.

“Martha, Martha,” said Jesus. “Right now it’s more important to listen to me than to be busy getting dinner ready. Mary has made a good choice. She will always remember the time she sat and listened to me.

(Based on Luke 10:38-42.)
Reproducible 8a: Ears