

Listen



Art by Kristen

It was late in the season. The Kings led the series two to one, and game four against the Lakers was today at 3:30. I wouldn't miss it for the world.

Some people said I should watch the WNBA (women's professional basketball) or the Home Shopping Network, but I had always been a tomboy. I made tree houses, not quilts. Basketball came naturally.

I was busy. I was *always* busy, but today my sister had invited guests over for lunch at one, so "busy" had taken on a whole new dimension.

Well, guest—singular—actually. She had invited one of her friends over. Mary had a lot of friends. Isn't it funny how your younger sister always has more playmates than you? I never minded it. Ever since I could remember, she had her friends and I had my work. I didn't care for her friends mostly—never had—but one had to make a good impression. And a good impression took a lot of work.

The salad was already done.—It was fresh from the package, and I was thankful for that. But the steaks were still frozen, the living room blared "aftermath," the potatoes were slowly

cobwebbing on the counter, and *someone* had forgotten to do the breakfast dishes. (Don't you hate that?)

First things first. I mumbled appreciation for whoever had invented the microwave, jumped into my favorite pink apron, and scrounged through the cluttered drawers for my peeler. The sink was mysteriously clogged, the morning's scrambled eggs and marmalade were welded to my favorite china, and I couldn't find my broom. The morning had been a losing streak for me and I hoped the Kings game at 3:30 would cheer me up.

The steel wool briskly numbed my fingers as it scraped the ceramic raw, and somewhere in between the first and second shattered salad bowls, I heard Mary amble in the door and sprawl on the living room couch with her friend.

I knew I should be out there with them, socializing, sitting with them, but I was too busy. And if I knew my sister, she could do enough listening for both of us. She was a good worker—really she was. Usually, at least. But every time HE came around, she suddenly dropped everything to be with HIM.

Not me, though. I knew better than to leave the house a mess just to be with some guy, whoever it was. I knew what was important, and that was serving the guy, not sitting there giggling.

Another salad bowl down. It didn't even have the courtesy to break into big pieces. For God's sake, where was that stupid broom? Why didn't I just buy plastic bowls? Bits of amber glass scampered across the floor like spiders and crunched as I inadvertently ground them into the floor.

I bent to pick up what was left of the bowl and my finger caught on something. Blood. How could a measly scratch bleed so much? Mary's sleighbell laugh floated into the kitchen from the living room as she shared some glittering moment with her friend. I reached for a dish-towel and dabbed the cut.

The water was still running. The sink began to overflow onto the counter. The world was spinning out of control. Why me?

"Martha."

My name. Who was calling my name? I muttered please-God-not-now's under my breath.

"Martha."

What did Mary's friend want with me? I hustled into the living room.

"Master," I said, "don't You care that my sister has left me to serve You by myself?" I waved my arm at her. "Can You, like, ask her to maybe help me a little?"

"Martha, Martha," He said as He stood and touched my wrist. "I know you have tons on your mind, but the most important thing right now is not *serving* Me. Your sister has chosen that good part—to *listen* to Me. That's the most important thing. You can't expect Me to take that away from her, can you?"

I shook my head and stared at the floor. "No." I swallowed. "Guess not." The blood was gone. The cut in my skin had sealed. How did He do *that*?

"Sit down," He said. "Listen to My Words." He winked and grinned. "Please?"

I sat.

My brother Lazarus would be home from his treatments at St. John's Memorial Hospital any minute, and the kitchen was a wreck. But the most important thing...

I squeezed into the love seat with my sister and her friend, the Master, the Son of God, Jesus. I listened to His Words.

It didn't matter that the microwave was screaming at me to rescue the sizzling filet mignons from its belly. It didn't matter that the Kings game was on in five minutes.

I was busy.



Is this just an amusing story? An interesting fantasy? Could Jesus actually walk into someone's living room and impart love and enlightenment by His Words?

This did, in fact, happen long ago, when Jesus visited the home of two sisters in the town of Bethany (in what is now Israel). Here is the Biblical account:

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 only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."
(Luke 10:38–42 NIV)

Time with Jesus can be a priceless pause in the day that puts everything back in perspective. You can spend time with Jesus through prayer, reading His Words, or meditating on His truth. It can be ten minutes or an hour, but if He is the focus—reflecting on Him, absorbing His love, taking in His Spirit, and thanking Him for all His blessings and wonders—it can be both exhilarating and renewing.

Jesus explains that we will find relief from pressure and anxiety as we leave busy-ness behind and approach Him. He said, "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28–29 NKJ).

You may think, "How will I find the time?"

The Bible says, "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these [other] things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33 NIV). If you will spend time in prayer, in God's Word, and in seeking Him from your heart, things will go so much better. And that will help you to either have more time, or get better results from your efforts. There's always time for the things you put first.

So try sitting at Jesus' feet. Be like Mary and you will understand the Bible verse that says, "You will fill me with joy in Your presence" (Psalm 16:11 NIV).

—By Joe Johnston and Chloe West