

Called to Minister

*A Woman's Day Program by Rachel Miller Jacobs
From Building the City of God: One Body, One Spirit
Mennonite Women*

Advance Preparation

You will need three dramatists, preferably two women and one man, plus a worship/song leader (who could also be a dramatist). Props include items for setting a table (tablecloth, wooden bowls, napkins, a ceramic pitcher, fruit, bread, candles, etc.) at the front of the worship space. This program is designed to be followed by a meal. Bread or fruit from the table that Martha sets in the drama could be distributed to all who take part in the actual meal.

Program

Leader: Today we celebrate two of Jesus' friends—Mary and Martha, sisters who represent aspects of every disciple, two aspects of every woman. In Luke's gospel, Jesus defends Mary's right and obligation to be a student, but it sometimes seems like he does so at Martha's expense. Today we'll take a light-hearted look at these women and consider ways that we can support each other in all our many ways of ministering. Then in Martha's honor we will enjoy a meal together. Let's begin by worshiping in song.

Sing HWB 8 "Brethren, we have met to worship," followed by responsively reading HWB 715. Sing HWB 90 "For the fruit of all creation."

The worship leader reads Luke 10:38-42, during which Martha (wearing a huge apron, perhaps with her hair in a scarf) enters, singing or humming "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God." Using items brought in a basket, she sets a table, exits, then re-enters carrying a platter of fruit. She exits, then re-enters with a basket of bread. She exits. Jesus and Mary come in, talking.

Mary: You want me to do what?

Jesus: I thought we could act out this story for the kids, after supper, so I wanted to run through it with you. *(Calls) Martha?*

Martha: *(From offstage)* What?

Jesus: Can you come out here? I need you.

Martha: *(Enters carrying a chair)* What?

Jesus: Lie down here. Look wounded.

Martha: Excuse me?

Mary: Oh come on, Martha, it'll be fun. We're putting together a play.

Martha: And you want me to act in it?

Jesus: Yes.

Martha: You're kidding, right?

Mary: *(Surprised)* Well . . . no

Martha: And in the meantime, who's going to *cook* the meal?

Jesus: Can't you just let whatever it is simmer a little?

Martha: When was the last time you cooked?

Jesus: Hm . . . I can't remember.

Martha: Have you ever cooked over an open fire?

Jesus: I've roasted fish.

Martha: And did you walk away to put on a play while you were doing it?

Jesus: Of course not, Martha. It would have burned.

Martha: My point exactly.

Mary: So you're saying no?

Martha: That's right.

Jesus: Please, Martha?

Martha: No, Jesus. *(Exits. Mary and Jesus look at each other, disappointed.)*

Mary: Well, perhaps we can try it without her.

Jesus: All right. I guess I'll be the guy who gets attacked. But first you have to ask the question.

Mary: *(In character)* Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

Jesus: *(In character)* What do you read in the law?

Mary: *(In character)* You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself.

Jesus: *(In character)* Well said—do this, and you will live.

Mary: *(In character)* But who *is* my neighbor?

Jesus: *(In character)* Let me show you. *(Mimes getting attacked, falls dramatically, and lies on the ground moaning.)*

Mary: Hey—you're good!

Jesus: *(Lifting his head)* Thanks. Now you be the priest.

Mary: All right. *(Walks along a path. When she comes near Jesus, she looks disgusted and carefully steps around him.)*

Jesus: You know, this would be a lot better with a narrator. How else will our audience know you're a priest?

Mary: I don't know.

Jesus: Martha? Please come, Martha. We need you.

Martha: *(Offstage)* I'm too busy right now. Maybe later.

Mary: Please? Come on, Martha. It would be so much better *with* you.

Martha: *(Offstage)* You guys don't get it, do you? The work doesn't do itself. I'll come when I can.

Mary: *(To Jesus)* Oh, well. I'll just have to try to look more priestly.

Jesus: Maybe you could stick up your chin and strut a little more. Look more important.

Mary: (*Strutting*) Like this?

Jesus: That's good. Now, come past me again. This time I'm going to look *really* dead.

Mary: How do you think a Levite would walk?

Jesus: I don't know—probably pretty much like a priest.

Mary: (*Walks past, again looking repulsed when she notices Jesus and giving him a wide berth.*) Ew—he's dead. (*Breaks character*) You know, Jesus, I can't be the Samaritan, too. That will just confuse people. How will they know when it's a Jew and when a Samaritan if I play both parts?

Jesus: Come on, Martha. We can't do it without you!

Martha: (*Enters carrying candles to put on the table. To Jesus*) Don't you care that Mary's left me holding the bag? Tell her to help me. She never listens to me, but maybe she'll pay attention to what you say.

Jesus: Martha, Martha. Why are you so upset about getting supper ready?

Martha: That's easy for you to say. You two just assume it will be taken care of, and it is—because I do it. If you're so anxious to calm me down, why don't you help me, and then I'll have time to put up my feet and talk, too.

Jesus: Mary has chosen a good part, and I'm not going to take it away from her. But you're right—if we helped out, you'd have more time to sit with us. So what needs to be done?

Martha: (*Amazed*) Well . . . you could stir down the fire so that the lentil stew can simmer, and get some water from the well. We also need to pull and wash some onions from the garden to rub on the pita bread.

Jesus: All right. Let's do it. (*All exit, then re-enter after a brief absence.*)

Martha: Thanks.

Mary: You're welcome.

Jesus: Now, Martha, you be the injured person. I think you could use a rest.

Martha: (*Lying down*) This feels good. . . .

Jesus: And you, Mary, be the Samaritan. I'll be the innkeeper.

Mary: (*Coming up to Martha*) Oh, my goodness—ma'am? Are you alive? Can you hear me? (*She listens, ear to chest, for a heartbeat.*) Yes, her heart is still beating faintly. (*Pats Martha's face*) Can you open your eyes? Here, let me help you get to an inn. (*They act this out.*)

Jesus: (*As innkeeper*) Yes, ma'am, I'll take good care of her. (*Steps to the side to take on a different persona, then speaks to Martha*) Now tell me, miss, who would you say is your neighbor?

Martha: Well, her, over there (*pointing to Mary*).

Jesus: How come?

Martha: Because she was merciful to me.

Jesus: Why?

Martha: Good question. You'll have to ask her.

Jesus: Well . . . ?

Mary: (*To audience*) It's because I love God.

Jesus: (*Sniffs, then exclaims, startled*) Oh, no. The stew is burning! (*All three rush out.*)

Sing in response HWB 541 “How clear is our vocation, Lord” or HWB 544 “When we walk with the Lord.”

The worship leader asks the women to divide into groups of three or four to talk about the play. Have each person answer: When and how have you been like Martha? When and how have you been like Mary? What do you notice when the stories of Mary and Martha and the Good Samaritan are put side by side? Talk about how women can support each other’s ministries in your local setting. After 15 minutes the worship leader calls the group back and leads in reading, in unison, the following affirmation of faith:

We believe in God,
who created women in the Maker’s own image,
loved us enough to call us good,
and trusts us in full knowledge of our frailty.
We believe in Jesus Christ,
who called women to study,
to follow,
and to serve.
We believe in the Holy Spirit,
who warms our hearts with love for all that God has made,
and makes us restless until we, and all things,
are made new.
We believe that the foolishness of God
is wiser than the wisdom of the world,
and we rejoice that God has made it so.

Sing HWB 434 “Thuma mina” or HWB 548 “Teach me thy truth.” The worship leader invites the group to pray prior to the meal.

Leader: Wherever you went, Jesus, you gathered people to eat: meals of roasted fish, sack lunch picnics for a crowd, banquets at the houses of wealthy friends. We thank you now for the gift of food, and for the gift of sharing it as hostess and guest. Amen.

(To the group) Come, friends, come and eat the food that has been prepared for you, and meet Jesus in the faces of your sisters.