

HEART WORK

104

The Heart of a Leader

MaryAnn Ruff and Donna Lamar
Hope EPC, Cordova, TN

Purpose

To encourage leaders to examine their hearts and look to the Lord to discover why they were called to lead. To understand that leadership that bears fruit is a matter of the heart.

Suggested Use

Any type of leadership training

Speaker/Leader for the seminar:

Introduction to study

- Share your heart
- Why do you lead? What has led you to where you are now?
- What do you care about? What is ministry to you?

Remind participants (your leaders)

Remember that God has ordained that you be where you are. He has purposes specifically for each one of you. God chooses to use you and me because...

For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord, "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. When you pray, I will listen. If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me. Jeremiah 29:11-13 "

What I pray for each of you is that as a result of leading you will love Jesus more each day; that because you said yes to leadership, you will experience God on a deeper level than you would have alone.

You might be wondering if you have the ability to lead:

- God didn't call you because of your gifts and abilities. He called you because of your heart. Gifts and talents can take you where you want to go, but only your character can keep you there.
- Leading is about the heart that wants to know HIM – this is essential for you and me.
- Leading is a result of being led by God! “A matter of the heart is the heart of the matter.”

A leader loves the Lord with all her heart and from that intimacy of a life giving; love relationship gives her life so that others will know His life changing love.

For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose hearts are completely His. II Chronicles 16:9

Therefore since the Heart is what matters most to God, that is where we need to start. What does the heart of a leader look like?

H Hears God
E Examines her heart
A Acknowledges her need for God
R Responds with love
T Teachable heart

This is the key. Anyone can learn how to handle difficult personalities, or how to fulfill your role or how to ask questions. But leadership that bears fruit is a matter of the heart!

Can you pray this prayer?

Speak to me Lord, I'm listening.

Show me Lord, I'm looking.

Reveal Yourself to me Lord, I surrender.

Send me Lord, I'm your servant.

Teach me Lord, I'm willing.

Now I want to unpack the heart of a leader by looking at Martha and Mary in Luke 10:38-42. You have heard this story many times but this time I want you to listen for two things that describe our leadership. Then I want you to hear the heart of God in His calling us to leadership.

Read the scripture reference.

Mary who sits at the feet of Jesus. To sit at Jesus feet in those days meant to be a disciple of a Rabbi. This implies that Mary was a disciple. She was being taught. A leader is a follower.

Martha who serves Jesus. In verse 40 you see the words “serving” and “preparation”. The word “serve” in the Greek is deaconate which means service and ministry. The same word that is used in Mark 10:45 when Jesus said, “The son of man came to serve and give His life as a ransom for many.”

Both sitting and serving describe a leader but God tells us the heart of a leader: it is one that chooses relationship whether we are sitting or serving.

As we discuss the different aspects of a leader ask yourself “what is my relationship with Jesus?” and “What do I want from my leading?”

H: Hears God

Both women heard God and both women served him.

We find Martha who welcomed Jesus but got distracted which means she was initially attracted.

We find Mary who was listening to the Lord, sitting at His feet.

When Martha tells on her to Jesus she says: “She left me” which implies she had been serving actively. Mary had not been inactive.

Both women heard God’s call but Martha got distracted by the activity. Mary was serving but she knocked off because the one dominant priority of her life is face time with Jesus. Her first priority is being in His presence, hearing His voice.

We can’t put a rule around this principle – how much time goes to service and how much time goes to sitting at Jesus feet. We miss the heart of the matter if we do that. The more we know the Jesus we serve the more we learn to hear His voice, the easier it will be to know when to sit and when to serve. We’ll know when to serve a 7 course meal and when serving sandwiches will do just fine.

At the core of Mary’s desire to serve is personal relationship with God. At the core of Martha’s desire to serve is activity.

Questions that are an indication you have got it out of order:

1. Are you knowing yourself out with the work of Jesus?
2. Are you irritated with God for not making every one else help you? So you compare, keeping score always judging who’s doing what?
3. Do you often feel the victim or have a martyr attitude?

The way to keep this from happening is to:

- Make His presence your priority
- Spend time with Him where He speaks and you listen
- Stay attracted to Him so that you don’t get distracted
- Then you’ll know when to sit and when to serve.

The more you spend time with someone, the more you know them. Think about a person you enjoy being with and know really well. You can be in a room and not even be sitting next to each other and you know what they are thinking and feeling. You know that look across the room...

A woman who HEARS God has: A heart that says, “Speak to me Lord, I’m listening.”

E: Examines her heart

In our story, we find two women serving the Lord but what is the motive? What is driving them?

Martha has a duty. How do we know it's a duty? Because she couldn't stop, because she had a different motive than Mary. Is she trying to earn God's favor, or is she trying to live up to her own expectations of what a meal is supposed to be for company?

Mary's action flowed from relationship. Her serving was out of delight and love of the Lord.

The motive of Mary's heart is delight in God. The motive of Martha's heart is duty to earn God's favor.

How do you know if your motive is duty or delight (love)?

Here are some questions to consider:

1. Am I demanding that others meet my needs on the timetable that I see fit?
2. Do I crumble under pressure, thinking the outcome squarely rests on my shoulders and not on God's?
3. Can I pry my fingers off what I am so desperately trying to control?
4. Do I start to self protect, marking a turf as though it were actually mine and forgetting that everything I have comes first from above?
5. Am I looking to honor God out of my great love for Him?

We need to keep vigilant watch and a constant willingness to examine our Heart and allow God to open the doorway to a life filled with the Wonder of all that He is. Serving God must be done in singleness of motive. God knows our motives, and as Believers, we must examine our motives to ensure we are motivated by love only. God is motivated by love and Jesus demonstrated His great love by laying His life down for us. When we love God, we will be motivated by love laying His life down for us. When we love God, we will be motivated by love and serving others as an expression of our love toward Him.

A woman who EXAMINES her heart has: A heart that says: "Show me Lord, I'm looking."

A: Acknowledges her need for God

How do you know if you are a Martha or a Mary? Look at your prayer life. Both women had a prayer life. Martha prayed “Lord, make Mary help me.” Martha’s prays in a way that reflects her wanting of things. Mary had a prayer life, but she is after relationship – sitting at the feet of Jesus.

- Mary goes to God as her need.
- Martha goes to God to get her need.

Look at your prayer life. Here are some questions to consider:

1. Is there never enough time for a prayer life?
2. When you do pray, is it only for the things you need?
3. Do you pray to know Him in the depths of your being?

Prayer is one of the greatest privileges God has given to man. It amazes me that I can come into the presence of God, the creator of this universe, and talk with Him. And what’s more – He always listen to me!

I’m also amazed that God has given me the privilege of talking with Him at any time. I don’t have to make an appointment or call in advance. I can come at any hour, for any need, and open my heart before Him. And God not only listens, He’s also promised to help me! He’s promised to guide me and to provide for my every need.

I imagine one of the great mysteries among the angels in heaven is that man has been given this glorious privilege of prayer, yet he takes such little advantage of it and treats it in such a peculiar way.

Of all God’s creatures, human beings have the unique and awesome privilege of being created in His image (Genesis 1:26-27). The greatest benefit of this is being able to have a personal relationship with God.

Throughout His Word, God repeatedly stresses the importance of right relationships. In fact, Jesus said that the two greatest commandments are to love God and to love your fellow man (Matthew 22:35-40).

Beginning with our creation, God has done many things to initiate a relationship with us. It is up to us to respond to Him and show initiative in nurturing that relationship with good communication. “Draw near to

God and He will draw near to you.” James 4:8 tells us. Our prayers keep us connected to God. A true friend is someone you talk with openly and regularly.

The words of the following song remind me of how much Jesus loves us and wants to be our friend.

Song: “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”

What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge, take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In His arms He'll take and shield you; you will find a solace there.

Blessed Savior, Thou hast promised Thou wilt all our burdens bear
May we ever, Lord, be bringing all to Thee in earnest prayer.
Soon in glory bright unclouded there will be no need for prayer
Rapture, praise and endless worship will be our sweet portion there.

A Woman who ACKNOWLEDGES her need for God has a heart that says, “Reveal yourself to me Lord, I surrender.”

R: Responds with love

Martha and Mary sit side by side, serving, both active. Mary doesn't let anything get in the way of sitting with Jesus. Mary is willing to let a 7 course meal become sandwiches. Martha can't let the meal go because the

meal has become the deal.

Mary responds out of love. Martha responds to get love.

This happens when we get our loves out of order. When we serve out of relationship and because God's love for us, our response is one of love and it's not about getting the activity perfect.

When the service becomes the top priority it's easy to start to think the service earns you the love you desire and that's why you overwork to get things perfect.

When we "Love the Lord with all our heart and soul and with all our mind and strength," (Mark 12:30) we begin to understand that our loving heavenly Father desires a true relationship with us. A relationship where our hearts speak loudly and clearly to God, "God, I give you all that I am, all that I have, and everything else that gives me meaning. For it is only because of You that I am, and everything in my life that I love, exists only because you gave it to me."

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. James 1:17 (NIV)

I make it a habit of asking God in prayer to help me never to forget Him.

Because by realizing that God is my everything, acknowledging Him in every aspect of my life, this allows Him the free reign to move in my life and wrap his loving arms around all the people and things that are important to me.

Here are some questions to consider:

1. Do you often feel unloved, looking for others to fill that void?
2. Do you often feel insignificant, looking for things like position or titles to fill that need?
3. Do you feel unnoticed, hoping that the "important" people will notice you or give you praise? Do you find yourself trying to position yourself around the "right" people at the "right" time to be noticed? Like a child that says: "look at me" it indicated a need for love. But only one love can fill that void.

Beth Moore says, “When you know you are well loved you will love well. God can not love through us what He doesn’t do in us.”

You are loved. Received what He’s already demonstrated in the death of His Son. When you receive from him the response is giving out of gratitude.

A woman who RESPONDS with love says, “Send me Lord, I’m your servant.”

T: Teachable

Listen to what God says: “Martha, Mary, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

Never stop learning that Only One Thing is necessary: Relationship with Him.

Jesus didn’t answer Martha’s prayer by making Mary help her so the meal wouldn’t go up in smoke. When Jesus said, “Martha, Martha...” It was His way of showing love. From Martha’s perspective the meal was important. If Jesus would have answered her prayer the meal would be a success according to Martha’s perspective.

From Jesus’ perspective the relationship was important. Jesus refused to answer her prayer because the relationship was most important. He saw that Martha had taken an activity and let it squeeze Him out.

God’s love in this story has never changed! It is unconditional. He loves both women. He loves us. It is unfailing, unchanging, and unconditional.

When we come to him with a willing heart, He will teach us the way to walk.

A woman who is TEACHABLE has a heart that says, “Teach me Lord, I’m willing.”

We see Martha is the doer and Mary is the one being with Jesus. There’s only one problem with looking at the story this way: none of us live in a world where we can divide our lives into either doing or being – we have to have both. And so did Mary and Martha. The Martha things have to be done: we need to eat and clean and do laundry, and all of those

other wonderful normal life things. Let's face it, we can't sit around all day being filled with glory – life does happen.

The first thing that Mary did was stop and sit. She left the activity of the kitchen and went and sat at Jesus' feet. So the first thing we need to do is decide when we are going to stop and spend time with Jesus. The next thing Mary did was to listen. Now we normally equate this with devotional time: reading the Bible and praying, and that's fine. That is one way to read this story, but there is another way. This is more than just "quiet time with Jesus."

Martha and Mary can be brought together. This was done a few hundred years ago by a monk named Brother Lawrence. Brother Lawrence joined a monastery because he wanted to devote his time to quiet prayer and meditation. Once in the monastery guess where Brother Lawrence found himself? He was assigned to run the kitchen. So much for quiet! But in the middle of all of his activity, getting up early to collect eggs, haggling at the marketplace, picking veggies, and fixing meals, he discovered that God was with him in all the noise and busyness of his life. He said, "The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clutter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess GOD in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees at the Blessed Sacrament."

As we make time to do the Mary things: sit, listen, and learn, we'll find that being aware of God's presence in the ordinary busyness of our lives will become more and more normal. We'll also find that we don't have to be either Martha or Mary; at different times we will be both. There are times we will be called to spend time with God alone and not do anything. There will be other times where we are busy serving our families, friends, and church. As we spend time with God—He will give us the desire to serve. As we serve and run low on resources, we go back to God for fresh indwelling.

Whether you are serving, surviving or sitting in silence, choose the one thing that means the most to Him – RELATIONSHIP with Him.

The **HEART** of a Leader begins with a love relationship with the Lord and overflows to all those in your path.

You and I are loved and prized by the God of all Creation. Simply because He wanted to, He fashioned each of us in His own image, creat-

ing within us the capacity to know Him.

And if that wasn't staggering enough in spite of our foolishness and rebellious heart, God has pursued us with relentless passion and patience, fully expressing to us His unfathomable love through the mercy and grace of the Cross of His son, Jesus Christ.

Now, think about praying this prayer:

Speak to me Lord, I'm listening	Hears God
Show me Lord, I'm looking	Examined heart
Reveal Yourself to me Lord, I surrender	Acknowledge need
Send me Lord, I'm your servant	Responds
Teach me Lord, I'm willing	Teachable

II Chronicles 16:9 "For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His."

Get To Know The Writers

MaryAnn Ruff is currently the Director of Women's Ministry at Hope Presbyterian Church in Cordova, TN. Previously she has served as the Women's Director at Forest Hill Church in Charlotte, NC, Colonial Presbyterian Church in Kansas City, MO, and Director of Connection Ministry at Myrtle Grove Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, NC. She contributed to the book *Leading Women to the Heart of God* by Lysa Terkeurst. She and her husband, Dave, have three grown children. Mary Ann's greatest joy in ministry is empowering women to lead others to the heart of God.

Donna Lamar is a member of Hope Presbyterian Church where she serves as an elder, leads a women's Bible study and a singles small group. She has taught elementary school in Christian Schools for 30 years and currently teaches English as a Second Language for the DeSoto County Mississippi school system. Donna has received a Masters of Science in Reading Education from Syracuse University, a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from the University of Memphis, certification for teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) from the University of Memphis and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) from the University of West Bohemia in the Czech Republic. Her heart's desire is to serve the Lord Jesus Christ for as long as she can in any way that she can.

For Further Reading: Devotionals

Abide in Christ by Andrew Murray

Be Still My Soul by Elisabeth Elliott

Dare to Journey with Henri Nouwen by Charles Ringma

Devotional Classics by Richard Foster and James Bryan Smith

Disciplines for the Inner Life by Bob Benson, Sr., and Michael W. Benson

Experiencing God Day by Day by Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby

Faith Alone: A Daily Devotional by Martin Luther

Jesus Calling by Sarah Young

Meet the Bible by Philip Yancey and Brenda Quinn

Mining for Wisdom by Derek Thomas
Morning and Evening by Charles Spurgeon
My Utmost for His Highest by Oswald Chambers
Prayers from the Heart by Richard Foster
Space for God by Don Postema
Spurgeon's Daily Treasury from the Psalms by Charles Spurgeon
Streams in the Desert by Mrs. Charles Cowman
The Divine Hours by Phyllis Tickle
The Transforming Power of Prayer by James Houston
The Valley of Vision edited by Arthur Bennett
Wilderness Time, A Guide for Spiritual Retreat by Emilie Griffin