

Session 33

Martha and Mary

When Jesus goes to the house of Martha and Mary, he continues to turn convention upside down. Where last session he chided Simon for not genuinely welcoming him, this time he chides Martha for following the conventions of welcome too fully! Jesus knew that although preparing a beautiful meal for him was a lovely gesture, actually spending time with him was more important. Is this something that we sometimes need to remind ourselves of too?

To plan your session... Choose a selection of *Play and learn*, *Bible time* and *God and me* activities to make your session fun and memorable.

Play and learn activity options...

Play and learn activity

Jesus posters

Activity time: 10 minutes

Aim: to realise that Jesus wants us to spend time with him

You will need: Jesus picture from page 244, crayons, scissors, glue, drawing paper, a large sheet of paper

- 1 Before hearing the Bible story, give each child a sheet of paper and ask them to draw a picture of themselves. Then let them cut these pictures out, helping as necessary.
- 2 Have available a copy of the Jesus picture from page 244. Stick this on to a larger sheet of paper, leaving plenty of space. (Make one each or a huge one for the whole group.)
- 3 Show the children the picture of Jesus. Say, 'Jesus wants all of us to be his friends.' Let the children place (but not stick) their own pictures on to the posters, with Jesus.
- 4 After the Bible story, come back to the posters again and this time say you are going to stick the pictures in place. Would the children like to be close to Jesus, like Mary?

Play and learn activity

Cleaning up

Activity time: 5 minutes

Aim: to realise that it is good to spend time hearing about Jesus

You will need: cleaning equipment such as cloths and brushes (but not sprays or polish), *The Big Bible Storybook* (SPCK) or other children's Bible

- 1 Tell the children that you have got lots of work for them to do. Produce the cleaning equipment. Ask them to clean the tables and chairs and brush the floor. Leave the children to it, while you sit down to look at the Bible.
- 2 One by one, call the children over to the storytelling area and start to look at pictures in the Bible together. Try to make this as interesting and attractive as possible.
- 3 Gradually, gather all the children together for today's Bible story. Did they prefer doing the cleaning or looking at the Bible? Did they feel cross when some people could sit down and some people had to do the work? That's what happened to someone in today's story: she was busy working, but then got a bit grumpy and confused. Lead into telling the Bible story.

Aim

To realise that Jesus wants us to spend time with him

Bible passage

Luke 10:38–42

Play and learn activity

Audio Bible story

Activity time: 10 minutes

Aim: to be still and listen to stories about Jesus

You will need: *Listen with the Bible* CD or mp3 track from the website, sound system, *Bubbles Sheet 33* from page 243 (optional)

- 1 Ask the children to sit down with you to listen to the story. Play the story 'A meal at Martha's' from *Listen with the Bible* CD 2 or from the website.
- 2 The children could use the story figures from *Bubbles Sheet 33* to help act out the story while they listen (see 'Using Bubbles'). Alternatively, they could mime some of the actions in the story, such as cutting up vegetables or grinding wheat. (These ideas should only be used if they enhance the story rather than distract the children from it.)
- 3 Praise the children for sitting still and listening. It can be hard not to be busy and active all the time, like Martha. But sometimes it is good just to sit quietly and listen to Jesus and stories about him, just like Mary did.

Tip for Leaders: The beginning of a session is when children are likely to be at their most alert and ready to learn.

Ready to use options...

Bible time activity

Using Bubbles

Activity time: 10 minutes

Aim: to realise that Jesus wants us to spend time with him

You will need: Bubbles Sheet 33 from page 243, *The Big Bible Storybook* (SPCK) or *Bonus Sheet H* from page 225, scissors, old bottles and boxes (optional), glue

- 1 Copy and cut out the pictures of the figures from *Bubbles Sheet 33*. You could stick them on to bottles or boxes to make them stand up.
- 2 Tell the story of 'Two friendly sisters' from *The Big Bible Storybook* or *Bonus Sheet H* using the story models.
- 3 Play a game with the story models. Use the appropriate characters and sing, to the tune of 'Here we go round the mulberry bush'. Start by holding 'Jesus' and looking at him:
Jesus wants to be my friend,
Be my friend, be my friend.
Jesus wants to be my friend –
And spend some time with me.
- 4 Hold 'Martha' and sing loudly, jerkily and quickly:
When I'm busy doing things...
Jesus is my friend.
- 5 Hold 'Mary' and sing quietly and slowly:
When I'm sitting quietly...
Jesus is my friend.
- 6 Repeat the first verse, holding 'Jesus' again. Make up further verses, based on what the children do in your group, in church and at home, such as 'When I sing and pray to God...' or 'When I play with all my toys...' Mime these things as you sing. Repeat the first verse as a chorus each time, holding 'Jesus'.

God and me activity

Talking to Jesus

Activity time: 5 minutes

Aim: to think about how we can spend time talking to Jesus

- 1 Tell the children that we can spend time with Jesus and talk with him about anything, however we feel. Sometimes we feel cross and grumpy, like Martha. Jesus understands and still loves us. He can help us feel sorry for being cross and then feel happier. Sometimes we feel happy and peaceful, like Mary. We can thank Jesus for good things.
- 2 Do the children have things they would like to talk to Jesus about? They may be used to praying spontaneously. Otherwise, you could lead a general prayer. Suggest the children make a cross face and pray, 'When we feel grumpy, help us to feel sorry. Please make us happy again.' Then suggest they smile and pray, 'Thank you for the times when we feel happy. Thank you for all the good things you give us.'

Play and learn activity

Finger rhyme

Activity time: 5 minutes

Aim: to think about spending time with Jesus

You will need: figures made from *Bubbles Sheet 33* from page 243 (optional)

- 1 Use this finger rhyme to show the contrast between the two sisters. (You could use the *Bubbles Sheet* figures if you prefer.)
Here is busy Martha, (*Hold up one thumb.*)
Working all the day. (*Wiggle thumb around.*)
Will she stop and listen
To Jesus' words today?
Here is listening Mary, (*Hold up other thumb.*)
Listening all the day. (*Keep thumb still.*)
She wants to sit and listen
To Jesus' words today.
- 2 Help the children to think about their own response to Jesus:
Will I be too busy?
What will I do today?
Will I stop and listen
To Jesus' words today?
- 3 Be ready to help the children 'listen' to Jesus in whatever way suits them: they may want to pray, draw a picture, tell the Bible story to each other – or simply get on with playing.



Options for children aged 3 to 5 years...

Bible time activity

Dramatised Bible story

Activity time: 10 minutes

Aim: to realise that Jesus wants us to spend time with him

You will need: drinks and cups, healthy snacks and plates (be aware of food allergies), costumes (optional), a co-leader

- 1 Tell the children that your co-leader is going to pretend to be Jesus in your Bible story. 'Jesus' needs to start outside the room or at the opposite side of the room to the children. Explain that you are going to pretend to be Jesus' friend, Martha; the children can all pretend to be Martha's sister, Mary. You may want to dress up in simple tunics and headaddresses to look the part.
- 2 Narrate the story in the character of Martha.
Our friend, Jesus, is coming to tea today so I want to make sure everything is just right. I've got lots of work to do. I've just finished cleaning the house, so now I just need to get the food and drinks ready. (*Knock at the door.*) Oh, that'll be Jesus now. I'll go and open the door.
- 3 'Jesus' comes in and sits down with the children. He asks the children if they would like to hear what he has been doing today or listen to a story. He then responds to their requests, using material from the Bible that is familiar to the children, making it exciting and engaging the children's attention. Meanwhile, you carry on

pouring out drinks and putting snacks on plates. Do this away from the children, so they are not distracted, but just vaguely aware that you are busy doing something. Take your time over this, so the children have a good opportunity to listen to 'Jesus'. Finally, interrupt Jesus in the character of Martha, speaking crossly: 'Jesus! Don't you care that I'm doing all the work? Tell my sister Mary that she should come and help me! She's just sitting there doing nothing! It's not fair!'

- 4 Jesus responds, 'Martha, Martha, don't get so cross and upset. It's lovely that you're getting some food ready – thank you. But you're my friend! I've come to see you and spend time with you and talk to you. Mary wants to listen to my stories. Stop working so hard and sit down here with me too, like Mary. It's good to do things for your friends but it's even better to spend time with them.'
- 5 Sit down and listen to the end of the story, looking happier. At the end of the story, comment, 'You're right. I feel much calmer now. I've enjoyed spending time listening to you.' Have the children enjoyed it too?
- 6 The food and drink you have prepared can be used in the 'Party time' (Play and learn: under 3 years).

God and me activity

Being still

Activity time: 5 minutes

Aim: to practise spending time being still with Jesus

You will need: quiet, reflective music (optional)

- 1 While music plays quietly in the background, talk with the children about how Mary was quiet, listening to Jesus. Now you are going to spend some quiet time, listening to Jesus' words.
- 2 Encourage the children to sit or lie quietly. Tell them that you are going to say some words that Jesus said. Although he said them a long time ago to other people, we can imagine that he is saying them to us now. Say these or other words slowly and meditatively with pauses between:
Jesus says, 'Let the children come to me, and don't try to stop them.' (Matthew 19:14)
Jesus says, 'I will be with you always.' (Matthew 28:20)
Jesus says, 'Don't be afraid! You are worth much more than many sparrows.' (Luke 12:7)
- 3 Ask the children how they feel, being still and listening to Jesus' words.

More on this theme

- If you want to do a short series with your group, other sessions that work well with this one are:
- Session 30** Jesus at Nazareth, Isaiah 61:1,2; Luke 4:16-21
- Session 31** Jesus heals a man, Luke 5:17-26
- Session 32** A woman with a gift, Luke 7:36-50

Options for children aged under 3 years...

Bible time activity

Bible story

Activity time: 5–10 minutes

Aim: to realise that Jesus wants us to spend time with him

- 1 Tell the story, inviting the children to join in with the actions.

Martha had invited her friend, Jesus, to dinner. There was a lot to do to get ready for their guest. (*Pretend to dust and clean the room. Let the children help you.*)

Just then Jesus arrived. (*Pretend to knock at the door.*) 'You sit down there, Jesus,' said Martha. 'I'll just make some dinner for us.' (*Pretend to be busy cooking: chopping, stirring and tasting.*)

'I could do with some help,' muttered Martha. 'I wonder where my sister, Mary, is?'

Martha found Mary. She was sitting on the floor, at Jesus' feet, listening to every word he said. (*Encourage the children to sit or lie in a comfortable position and just be quiet for a few moments, pretending they are listening to Jesus.*)

'I've got lots of work to do!' exclaimed Martha. 'Don't just sit there! Come and help me, Mary!' (*Stand up and look angry and flustered.*)

But Jesus said, 'Relax, Martha! Don't worry about the food. Come and spend time with me, like Mary. It's more important to spend time with me than to get the jobs done.' So Martha sat down to listen to Jesus too. (*Encourage the children to sit down and relax again.*)

- 2 After the story, ask the children, 'Which was more important: getting the jobs done or spending time with Jesus?'
- 3 Suggest you spend time with Jesus now in whatever way the children want – singing a song, talking to him or being still and quiet.

God and me activity

Stories with friends

Activity time: 5 minutes

Aim: to spend time listening to stories about Jesus

You will need: rugs and cushions, *The Big Bible Storybook* (SPCK) and other children's Bibles

- 1 Arrange a comfortable seating area with a rug and cushions. Put out a collection of children's Bibles and storybooks. You may be able to find some new ones that the children haven't seen before at your local library.
- 2 Invite the children to look at the books with you, other adults and their friends. Talk about the pictures and the stories about Jesus. What do the children know about him? Which is their favourite story? Why? Can they find it in the book? (You could watch a story about Jesus on DVD or listen to a recorded story and then talk about it.)
- 3 Make sure the children have an enjoyable, positive time, looking and listening and learning about Jesus. They are being like Mary in the story, spending time with their friends, and listening and learning about Jesus, their best friend.

Play and learn activity

Party time

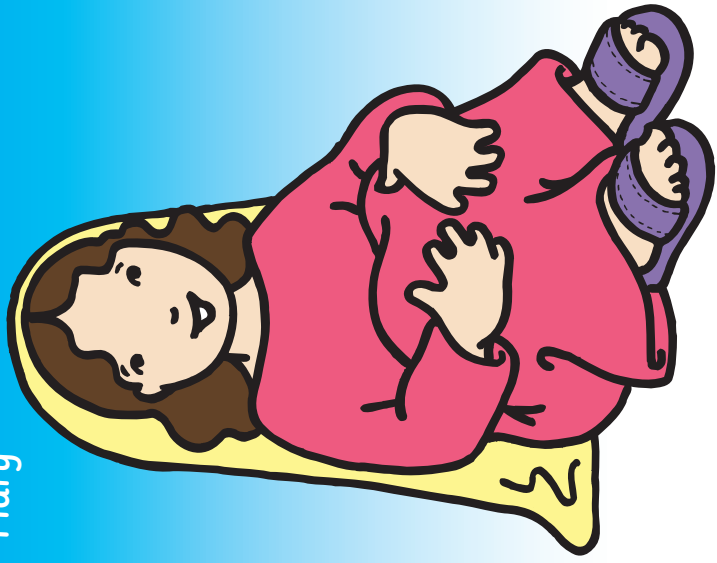
Activity time: 5–10 minutes

Aim: to enjoy spending time with friends like Mary and Jesus did

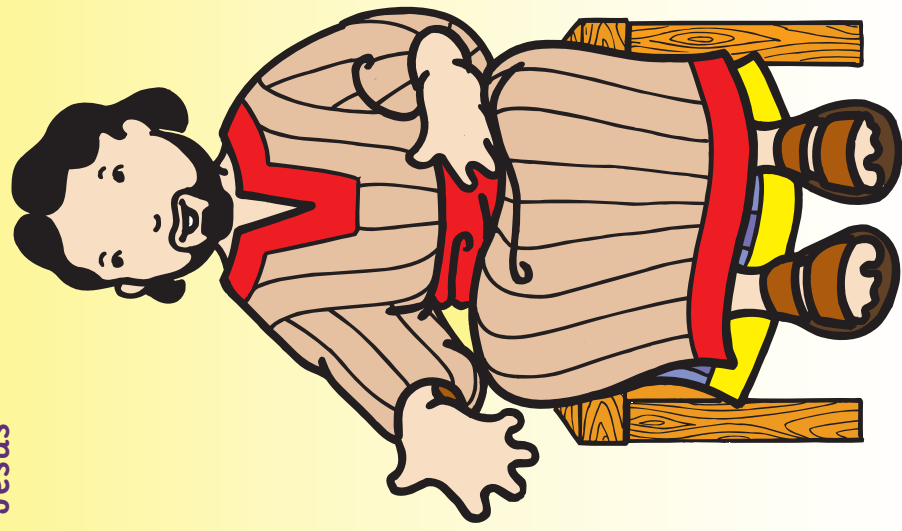
You will need: healthy drinks and snacks (be aware of food allergies)

- 1 Produce some healthy food and snacks and have a party. Explain to the children that they are all your friends and you want to share this treat with them. Make sure that the emphasis is not on the food and drink but on the time spent together.
- 2 Use this time to relax and talk with the children, generally or in small groups. Talk about what you and they did at the weekend, about their friends, their likes and dislikes, and about their families. Enjoy spending quality time together as Jesus and Mary did, without rushing on to the next activity. Comment on how good it is to spend time with friends. It's good to spend time talking with our friend Jesus too. Would the children like to do that now?

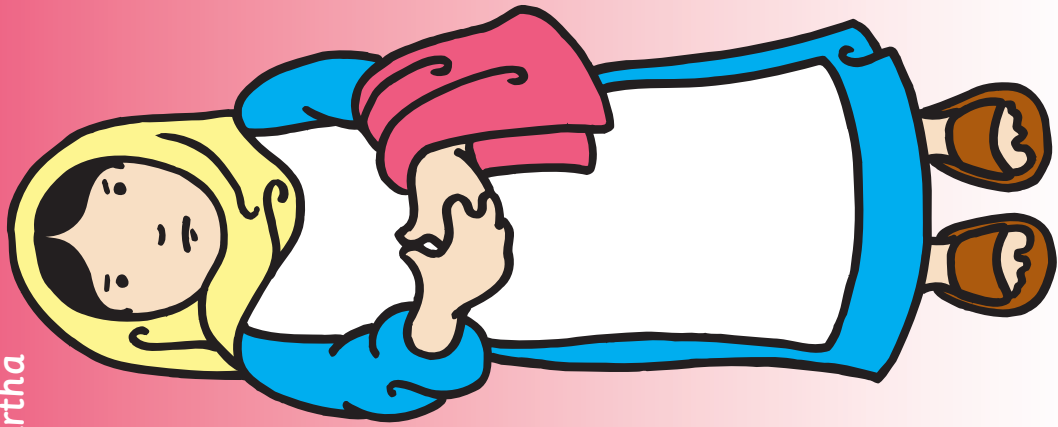
Mary



Jesus



Martha



What is it like to
meet Jesus?

Our task this time, as parents and carers, is to help our young children discover that receiving from Jesus, hearing about him, learning of him and listening to him is thrilling and wonderful – better than anything else we could be doing, learning or enjoying. Time with Jesus is time well spent. Doing nothing, but doing it with Jesus, is not wasteful.

33
Bubbles

Tell the
Bible story

In this Bible story, Mary is the one who gets the balance right. In your own life, are you more like Martha or Mary? How can you get the balance right so that you also have the opportunity to "be" with Jesus as well as doing things for him?

