

# JOURNEY IN... YEAR ONE

## ON BEING HUMAN STORYTELLING

This lesson's Big Ideas:

- All human beings share the same basic needs and many of the same desires.
- All human beings experience the same basic emotions.
- Most of our emotions arise from the fulfillment (or lack thereof) of wants and needs.
- One human need can only be filled by the Sacred—the need to connect with God.

Lesson Materials

- Biblical story of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42)  
An adaptation is attached.
- One copy of *Material World* by Peter Menzel. Separate all of the book's pages and laminate four pages of each spread, back to back.

### TEACHER REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

🕒 Ahead of time

Type text of teacher reflection and self-preparation here.

### GATHERING AND FOCUSING

🕒 5 minutes maximum

Ask the students some of the following questions to get them thinking:

- What do you think is the difference between a “need” and a “want”?
- Help me name some needs that people like you have. Now help me name some wants that people like you have.
- Did you have everything you needed this morning when you woke up and got ready to come to Sunday school?
- How does it feel inside when you really need something and someone takes care of that need? (use their ideas as examples)
- How does it feel when you really want something, but you don't get it? (use their ideas as examples)

### PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE STORY: JESUS VISITS MARY AND MARTHA

🕒 15-20 minutes

- From memory, share the story of Mary and Martha (attached)

**TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LESSON**

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**YOUR FIELD EXPERIENCES: FEEDBACK AND NOTES**

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with the children. Use your voice and your body to make things interesting. Allow them to supply brief answers to some of the questions about feelings.

**Wondering Together:**

Ask open-ended questions such as the following to explore the story's meaning.

- I wonder how you think Mary and Martha are the same. I wonder how they are different?
- What do you think guests need when they come to your house for dinner?
- I wonder if you'd rather have Mary or Martha as a sister? Why?
- I wonder if you are more like Mary or Martha? How so?
- Let's name some things that people need to be able to survive. How about some things that most people want?
- I wonder, which of our needs is the most important?
- At the end of the story, Jesus says that Mary is trying to get the one thing that people really, truly need? What do you think that one thing might be?

**PRIMARY ACTIVITY TWO  
STORYTELLING FROM A PROMPT**

🕒 20-25 minutes

- Using the laminated pages of the book *The Material World*, children will come together in pairs of two or three to tell stories to one another about the lives portrayed in the photo.
- The workshop leader will demonstrate this storytelling once for the class and then allow them to break up and select their story prompt photos.
  - Take one of the photo pages from the pile and show it to the kids. Explain that you are going to become one of the people in the picture and you are going to tell the story of their life using the words "I".
  - Stress that you're going to focus your story on a few things:
    - Why you need some of the things that are pictured
    - What else you need to live a healthy, happy life
    - What one thing you really want, deep in your heart
    - How you were feeling when the photo was taken and why
  - Let them know that all good storytellers take a moment to think about their story, about their listeners and about themselves when they get ready to tell a story. Take a few moments to visibly reflect on the photo (even if you've told your

### TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LESSON

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story five times by now) and then

- Make up a story about the life you see pictured. Tell it from the first person point of view.
- When you're finished, invite some feedback
- Now ask the students to pick a photograph that interests them. Ask them to spend about 5 quiet minutes (less time for younger kids) imagining their story. Signal the end of this quiet thinking time with a chime or other sound.
- Allow students to self-select pairs or small groups and take turns sharing their story. Remind them to speak using "I" - it will help them invent narrative rather than stick to objective description.

### GATHERING AND REFLECTING

🕒 5-10 minutes

Gather the kids together and ask a few closing questions:

- Did you enjoy telling someone else's story? Why?
- How many of you seemed to have happy, satisfied characters? How many of your characters seemed unhappy?
- Do the people of your stories seem to have everything they need? Everything they want?
- Based on what you see in the photos, I wonder how their lives compare to yours?

### CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING

🕒 2 minutes

Ask the children to think of themselves and then their own family, then the family in their photo and then all the people of the world as you speak this blessing adapted from the *Metta Sutra*:

*May all beings be happy, content and fulfilled*

*May all beings have whatever they want and need*

*May all beings enjoy inner peace and ease*

*May there be peace in their world and throughout the entire universe.*

Amen

Jesus Visits Mary and Martha  
rewritten by Kerri Meyer

Mary and Martha were sisters. Like many sisters, they'd had a hard time getting along as they grew up. They both wanted their parents' attention and sometimes they fought for it. They both wanted the loveliest cloth for their clothing and sometimes they fought about it. Neither of them wanted the hardest chore of walking to the not-so-close well and carrying back the heavy jars of water, and sometimes they fought about it.

When this story happens they were grown up, and they lived together in Martha's house. They had everything they needed: a solid roof over their heads, big clay jars to fetch water from a lovely, cool well very near their door, clothes to protect them from the elements. Mary and Martha's brother, Lazarus, had helped the two women buy a goat this year. They certainly didn't fight like they did when they were younger, but sometimes, Mary - with her tendency to daydream and do what she **wanted** to do - drove her sister Martha, crazy! And sometimes, Martha - with her bossy ways and her love of naming long lists of things that **needed** to be done - drove her sister Mary crazy, too!

On the morning that this story begins, a sweet breeze was blowing through the olive grove where Mary and Martha were helping neighbors to harvest the olives from the trees. Well, Martha was helping, because she knew that people need olive oil to cook with and to burn in their lamps at night. Mary, on the other hand, spent a lot of the morning gazing up through the silvery-green leaves to the great blue sky beyond wondering how the trees made the olives and how the clouds made rain. Just as Martha was preparing to give her younger sister a talking to, a boy came running and shouting up over the hill into the grove of olive trees. It was Zechariah, a boy from the open lands in between Bethany and Jerusalem. Mary and Martha knew him well - he often came to their door hungry for a piece of bread, which the women shared with him happily.

"Mary! Martha! Put down those baskets right now and follow me back to your home. You've got company coming! And not just any company - Jesus of Nazareth is coming to Bethany and he's going to dine at your house!"

The neighbors' eyes widened. Everyone had heard of Jesus of Nazareth. What a wonderful teacher he was! What very interesting stories he told! How kind he was! How near to God and how wise in the truths of the world! Jesus of Nazareth!

"Oh my! Oh my" Martha gasped, "So much needs to be done." She nearly dropped her basket to the ground and was about to head back to her home at a gallop when Mary grabbed at the hems of her robes to stop her.

"Wait, I want to know more," said Mary. "Zechariah, you say Jesus is coming? Who is with him? When will they arrive?"

Zechariah explained that it wasn't just Jesus coming, but in fact it was Jesus and many of his disciples and followers, too. Can you guess how many? Seventy! Seventy people were coming to dinner. They were on the road from Jerusalem to Bethany and would surely be here before the sun set!

Mary and Martha ran back to their house, straight into the little kitchen with the small earthen oven and the many clay bowls and the one big metal pot. The sisters sent Zechariah back to help the neighbors finish the job in the olive grove with the promise of leftover bread and fish later.

Martha began to list off the things that needed to be done. They were important things!  
"Jesus will need to wash his feet after the long journey. We'll need water from the well. He and his friends will be hungry, too! Oh! Seventy people! We'll need many loaves of bread. We'll need more wood for the oven.

We need to milk the goat and wash some fruit and...and..."

How do you think Martha was feeling just then?

Mary listened to Martha go on and on. But her mind wasn't on the long list of things to do. She was thinking about their very special guest. Jesus. Mary and Martha had met Jesus before; their brother Lazarus was Jesus' dear friend. Jesus was such a different man - he was gentle and so very wise. He told beautiful stories that taught people how to be kind and how to come closer to God. Mary loved Jesus stories. Mary wanted very much to learn more about God.

Mary's wondering was interrupted by Martha's hand, thrust into her face, holding the handle of their broom. "You can start by sweeping out the house and the courtyard!" Martha said, her voice tight and loud.

Mary swept the sitting room and wondered about God. She swept the courtyard and wondered more about God. She swept outside each door and around the house and wondered more about God. It took her a while to do the sweeping.

Meanwhile, Martha was very busy. She ground a great deal of grain into soft, light flour. She kneaded the dough and made lovely round loaves of bread and baked them. She milked the goat. She soaked some dried fish in sweet olive oil and herbs. She filled the lamps. All of these things needed to be done and the sun kept sliding across the sky. So many things left to do and so little time.

In the mid-afternoon, Martha wondered, "Where is that sister of mine?" She found Mary slowly finishing up the sweeping.

"You've been sweeping all this time!?! There are a million things left to do!?" hollered Martha.

"I wanted to do a good job," Mary replied. Martha sighed loudly.

Martha sent Mary into the village to buy several large jars of wine. She gave her sister enough money to hire a donkey to carry the wine back home.

Mary went off toward town at a quick jog. There she bought wine and found a man with a donkey for hire. They started the walk back home, slower now because the donkey was weighed down.

At home, Martha continued to bake bread and prepare a meal. The sun was getting lower in the sky. Surely Jesus would arrive any minute!

On the path from Bethany, Mary spotted a patch of tiny yellow flowers on slim green stems and she thought, "Oh, I want to pick some of those for Jesus and our guests. I know people don't *need* flowers, but wouldn't they make us all happy?" So she asked the man with the donkey to stop as she picked a great armful of flowers. When she finished, the sun was nearly touching the hills to the west.

Just as Mary came into the courtyard with the donkey and the wine, she heard the friendly voices calling from the top of the hill. They were here! She paid the man with the donkey and ran out to meet the guests under the olive trees. So many people!

Jesus seemed very happy to see her. His kind smile lit up her heart, just as it had lit up the hearts of all the men and women who followed behind him. She guided the many guests into the courtyard and brought Jesus and his closest disciples in to sit near the warm fire that Martha had lit. Mary shyly laid the flowers in a basket near

Jesus, the wonderful teacher, and then sat near his feet.

“Could you please tell the story about the wedding banquet?” asked Mary. “I want to know so much more. I want to hear all of your stories about how to be a kind person and know more about God.”

In the kitchen, things were not going so well for Martha. She needed more water from the well. She needed more platters to arrange all the food beautifully. She cut the figs and poured honey into little bowls. She found many cups for serving wine, but not nearly as many as they'd need.

Martha had been working all day. She had spent the whole day preparing for the most important guest in all of Judea. Surely he would find the house and the dinner ill-prepared! Surely he would think that she hadn't cared about the things he would need and want as a guest. But Martha herself was tired and needed to rest. She herself was hungry and needed some good food. She looked messy and wanted to tidy herself up.

All this work and no help! And where was that sister of hers, anyways? What had she done all day? Swept and went to town! Some help she was! Always doing things how she wanted and never getting done what needed to be done. And now the company was here and Martha hadn't even greeted them! Just as she was complaining to herself, she burnt her fingers taking the last of the bread from the oven.

*Ow! Ow! Oooooh! That's IT!!*, thought Martha.

Unkempt and irritated, Martha stomped to the doorway of the sitting room. There she saw all the disciples and there was Mary, sitting happily at Jesus feet, listening to him talking. The nerve! How do you think Martha felt? (She felt angry!) And she wasn't sure whether she was angrier with Mary for not helping or with Jesus for not telling Mary to get back in the kitchen where she could be useful to her older sister.

Martha stepped one angry step further into the room, stood hands on her hips and cleared her throat - AHEM!! Everyone stopped listening. Jesus stopped talking. They all turned and looked at her.

“Excuse me, Jesus. We're so happy you're here.” Martha began, indignantly. “But, don't you see that my sister is just *sitting there* while I'm busy preparing the meal for you? She's left me to do all the work by myself! I'm sure you're hungry and need to eat! Why don't you just tell her to come help me so that you and your friends can enjoy a warm meal!! Surely you, a good and wise teacher, can straighten her out!”

Jesus smiled a kind, patient smile.

“Martha...Martha,” he said gently, “I can see that you're worried and upset over so many things. It's true, we're hungry. Thank you for preparing the food that we need. But Martha, there's *one thing* that people really, truly need more than anything else. Mary is here listening because she wants to fill that need. I won't take that away from her.”

Martha's mouth dropped open. But then, as she saw the kind patience in everyone's eyes, the thankfulness in their smiles, she realized that they weren't as worried about their needs as she was. She closed her mouth slowly.

“Try not to worry, Martha. Bring what you have prepared and we'll share it gratefully. And then come sit with us and find some of what you really need.”

And Martha did.