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Choosing the Better Role

Luke 10:38-42

It has been said that our society has relegated women to two rooms in the house—the kitchen and the bedroom. This is another way of saying that women are not permitted full development in our society. Their development is encouraged primarily in two areas—in serving and in sensuality.

GROUP DISCUSSION. Have members of the group freely call out word associations with *female*. Assign one person to write them on newsprint or a chalkboard. Don't censor words; just generate a list quickly. Then do the same for the word *male*.

Take some time to discuss the list. Where did these ideas come from? Are they “natural” (that is, genetic or socially constructed)? Which words do people think are “biblical” (that is, qualities God wants to see developed in both men and women)? Why? Which words do people think reflect qualities God values in humans? Are the lists the same? If not, why not?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. Write about your ideas about what it means to be a woman. If you are a man, separate the question into two parts:

What do I think it means to be a woman, and what would it be like to experience life as a woman?

Mary and Martha were sisters, but their response to Jesus' visit was quite different. Martha responded in the traditional way expected of a woman. Mary responded in a way that was much more conducive to her personal and spiritual growth. *Read Luke 10:38-42.*

1. What do you picture Martha doing as Jesus talked to Mary (v. 40)?

What do you think she was feeling?

2. Why did Martha complain to Jesus (v. 40)?

3. What did Martha think Jesus' expectations of her were?

4. How do you think Mary was feeling before Martha was upset?

How do you think she felt after Martha got upset?

5. What did Jesus mean by “one thing is needed” or “only one thing is worth being concerned about” (v. 42)?

6. Why hadn’t Martha responded to her real need(s)?

7. Why is it still hard today for women to respond to their real needs?

8. In what ways do these limited gender roles make it hard for men as well?

9. In what ways do churches encourage the mentality that the “Martha” kind of service is the more acceptable role for women?

10. How might churches develop a more biblical attitude toward the role of women?

11. How would the gifts of the church be greatly enhanced if women were freer to develop their spiritual lives and gifts?

12. Whether you are male or female, what in your expectations of and attitudes toward women needs to change?

Thank God for challenging women and men to be truly free through their obedience to Jesus' words and examples, rather than bound by cultural restrictions which may be damaging to the full development of personhood.

Now or Later

During the week notice how gender roles are portrayed in magazine advertisements—car advertisements or beer advertisements are especially good for this. Imagine the advertisement with all the gender roles reversed (that is, all the women are men and all the men are women). What insights come from this?