

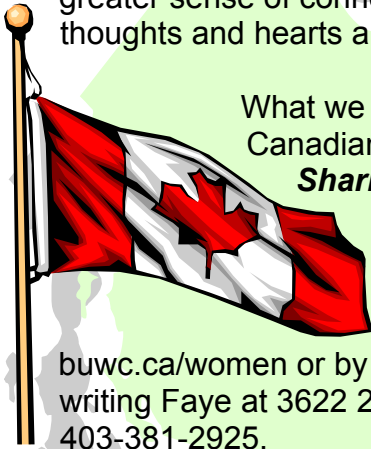
Women Gather for HIV/Aids Intervention through

# THE GREAT CANADIAN BIBLE STUDY

Canadian Baptist Women are inviting you to participate in a program to unite us as Baptists across Canada as well as contribute to the care of HIV/AIDS victims in Africa through The Sharing Way. Here is how it works:

For January 2006, we will be sending our churches a new Bible study. We would like as many women as possible to meet some time in the month of January to do this study together. It is one lesson and can be done in small or large groups

We hope that the study will edify those who participate and foster a greater sense of connectedness to our Baptist sisters as we unite our thoughts and hearts around a single passage of Scripture.



What we ask in return is that each participant in the Great Canadian Bible Study contribute a Toonie (\$2.00) towards **The Sharing Way's Guardians of Hope program**. The money can be sent to Alice Sowden, #208 – 2520 Dingwall Street, Duncan, BC V9L 2Y9.

The Study is available from our website: [buwc.ca/women](http://buwc.ca/women) or by emailing Faye Reynolds at [sfreyncolds@shaw.ca](mailto:sfreyncolds@shaw.ca), or by writing Faye at 3622 21<sup>st</sup> Ave. S, Lethbridge, AB. T1K 3T1 or by phone at 403-381-2925.

Let us come together around God's word and reach out while reaching in.

So

Just Do It!

THE GREAT CANADIAN BIBLE STUDY

January 22 – 29, 2006

DON'T MISS IT

## **Sisters of Lazarus, Friends of Jesus**

We all face sickness, death and loss throughout our lives and each of us handles those experiences differently. We have different personalities. Though we might come from the same background or family, we process our grief in unique ways. In this study, we will look at two very different women, Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, to observe their behaviour in a time of crisis and grief. Perhaps we will see ourselves, or perhaps we may not. It is my hope that you will at the very least discover that Jesus comes to each of us in the way that is just right.

### **Background Material: Luke 10: 38 – 42**

In this passage, we meet two sisters, Mary and Martha. They live together in the home of Martha. As it was unusual for a woman to own property, it is likely that she is a widow and the home was left to her. If it were a family inheritance the property would belong to Lazarus, her brother. Widows were most often dependent upon male family members for income and support because they could not hold land title or take employment.

Jesus had been to this home many times, for He knew He was loved and accepted here. In this story, Jesus and his disciples sit down for some relaxation away from the press of the crowds. Both sisters are delighted to see Jesus but they express their enthusiasm in very different ways. As we understand these women, it is important to not pass judgment upon their personalities, but rather consider how they react to certain situations.

### **MARTHA**

1. Describe the personality of Martha.
2. What are Martha's strengths?
3. How might her personality have helped her in her life situation?
4. What is Martha's way of expressing her love to Jesus?
5. What goes wrong for Martha in this story? How does she become upset and begin to lose focus on the day?
6. Have you ever slipped into the "poor me" syndrome? What situations do you tend to feel "hard done by" even when you are doing what comes easiest to you?

### **MARY**

1. Describe the personality of Mary.
2. What are Mary's strengths?
3. How might her personality have helped her in her life situation?
4. What is Mary's way of expressing her love to Jesus?
5. What is it about Mary's behavior in this situation that draws praise from Jesus?

6. How has your desire to learn more about Jesus placed you in the right place at the right time? (Note: It was improper for women to take the position of a learner or disciple at the foot of a teacher. Only men would do this. Mary took a risk and receives the praise of Jesus.)

### **Focus Passage: John 11: 17 – 44**

The two sisters are struck down with grief and loss. Lazarus has died. This is the brother they love. He was their security in a world so unfriendly to women. Their beloved has been taken away and the future looks bleak indeed. Let's see how each woman handles her grief and how they bring that sorrow to Jesus.

### **MARTHA**

1. Martha goes out to meet Jesus on the road. What does that tell you about Martha's personality? What approach does she seem to take toward difficult situations?
2. What does she say to Jesus? What does she imply by her first statement, "If you had been here, my brother would not have died."? Would Martha have "stayed where she was for two days" (John 11: 6) if she had heard the news that a loved one was sick? How is she processing the recent events?
3. "But I know that even now, God will give you whatever you ask." What does this statement reveal about Martha and her relationship with Jesus? What do you think she is expecting?
4. Read the next dialogue (vs. 23 – 27):
  - Consider that Jesus knows Martha well and understands her. What is Martha's need at this time of grief and how does Jesus meet that need?
  - How does her response to Jesus' statements express her understanding of Jesus as Messiah?

*Author's Note: I see Martha as a practical, logical thinker that copes by doing. I believe she thought that Jesus could have healed Lazarus if he had arrived in time – I don't think it entered her mind that Jesus could raise Lazarus from the dead. She needed reassurance from Jesus that Lazarus would rise in the last days as she understood Jewish teaching on the subject. (Pharisees believed in a resurrection and afterlife, Sadducees did not.) She also trusts in Jesus to take care of her and Mary's personal needs for the future. A woman without male family to care for their needs would be placed in great difficulty. That is my understanding of her statement, "But I know that even now, God will give you whatever you ask." Her future was in Jesus' hands and she was comfortable with that. I believe that is the strength of her faith. The miracle of Lazarus coming to life would be more than she could even conceive, as it would be difficult for you or I to conceive of today.*

### **MARY**

1. When Mary hears that Jesus is coming, she doesn't initially go out, but waits. What does that reveal to you about Mary's personality? How does she cope at this point in time?

2. When Martha announces that Jesus is here, what is Mary's response?
3. What is Mary's reaction when she sees Jesus? What does she say to Jesus? Though the words are similar to Martha's words, do you sense a different meaning behind them?
4. How does Jesus respond to Mary's statement? What is it that moves Jesus to tears? How is he giving Mary what she needs at this stage of her grief?

*Author's Note: The Scripture states that Jesus was "deeply moved in spirit" (NIV translation) or "He groaned in Spirit" (KJV). This phrase is difficult to translate and carries the sense of anguish, agitation, anger and distress. Jesus isn't just sad, his soul is in anguish. Some say he was indignant at the mourners following Mary. I personally believe that the reality of earthly death and suffering struck Jesus very personally. Yes, he could raise Lazarus and intervene in this situation, but many others have and will continue to suffer grief and loss in this life. He enters into the grief of Mary and he weeps.*

Mary, not one to look ahead, is stuck in the moment of overwhelming grief. Jesus doesn't try to comfort her with any words or theological discourses of Lazarus's destiny, he cries with her. He came to Martha in the way she needed, and now he comes to Mary in the way that she needs. Neither is better or worse. Two different women have two different needs and Jesus comforts them both.

When Jesus asks for the stone to be removed, Martha's response reveals once again her practical outlook. He was dead and death stinks. None the less, she is obedient to the request. Even though Martha is a logical thinker and action based, she is willing to act even when she doesn't understand. That reveals the depth of faith that Martha had in Jesus, and how miracles can happen even for those that do not expect them.

We do not know what Mary expected, but we certainly know what she desired. She just wanted her brother back. She received her heart's desire. Oh, how we would all love to receive that kind of miracle in the midst of our grieving.

1. What words, actions or beliefs were most helpful to you at a time when you were grieving?
2. How did Jesus come to you and what healing did you receive?
3. Are you more like Martha or Mary in your personality?
4. What are some of the traits in you that might hinder you from receiving all that Jesus has to offer you?
5. What are the strengths within your character that help see you through difficult times?
6. Has Jesus ever used these strengths to help comfort others in a time of need?
7. What have you learned about Jesus?
8. What have you learned about yourself?
9. What is your hope?