

Have Yourself a MARY Little Christmas

by Laura Macfarlan



The Mary-Martha tension is a continual challenge for most of us. Finding the right balance between the eternal and the temporal is a daily dilemma. Perhaps this angst is never greater than during the holiday season. Our desire to do all the “Martha” cooking, baking, decorating, hosting, serving, giving collides with the heart call to be a Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus.

Rather than categorizing daily life and activities as either “Mary” or “Martha,” perhaps the real way to have a Mary Christmas is to smear the lines between the two – take our Mary mindset with us to our Martha tasks. Here are a few ideas for making it happen:

- 1. Be sure your day begins in the Word** sitting at the feet of Jesus. Making time with the Lord a priority is key to keeping a “Mary” heart in the midst of our “Martha” demands.
- 2. Protect the schedule.** Over committing ourselves adds unnecessary stress to us and those we love. Go ahead and write “It’s A Wonderful Life” on the calendar or “Wrap Gifts.” You can then kindly decline invitations for that night, noting that you have a prior commitment. Watching a favorite holiday movie while eating popcorn and just being together will provide a welcome respite from the “go, go, go” of the season.
- 3. Make lists.** Christmas cards, gifts, food preparation. Pray over the lists. Ask God to provide wisdom in expending the valuable resources of time and money.

4. Make a Christmas notebook. It will be helpful to compare my last year’s list to this year’s list. Did I give my mother-in-law gloves two years in a row? Did a neighbor bring over a plate of goodies last year, so I don’t want to overlook them this year? Use pocket folders for ads, notes, and loose papers to carry along.

5. Simplify. Made from scratch might sound noble, but it also might be a source of pride.

6. Share baking tasks with a friend. It’s easier to bake a triple batch of the same recipe than to bake three different recipes. Enlist the help of two friends and then trade your bounty. You will each be rewarded with a variety of Christmas cookies for your platter. Keep these in the freezer until needed.

7. Transform wrapping time into prayer time. Pray for the gift recipient as you wrap each gift. The stress of getting it all done evaporates and condenses into a sweet time of glorifying God, as we pray for others.

8. Share the love of Christ. A focus on others will capture the essence of the Christmas season. Adopt a family, fill a Christmas shoebox, or take a bag of canned goods to the Manna Center. Blessing others brings the added benefit of blessing the giver.

9. Make an “I already have list.” There’s a reason that Thanksgiving comes just

before Christmas. Cultivating and keeping a thankful heart is an effective antidote for materialism and selfishness inherent with the “I want ...” mindset in your family.

10. Give it away. Ask each family member to count how many gifts they receive. Then issue a challenge to find that many items to give away. It will make room for the new, while also blessing others.

11. Keep the Christmas music playing. Music transforms the soul, bringing a sweet soaring of the heart to even the most routine of tasks.

12. Accumulate the Christmas cards received in a basket. Pull one out at each meal and pray for the sender. Share a story about the individual or family who sent the card. It will be fun to share memories with your children who might not remember Aunt Pearl or Uncle Rex.

Judy Garland made the lyrics to the song famous in 1943, but the challenge to have a Merry Christmas is much older than that. Here’s wishing you and yours a very MARY Christmas!