

Torrey 1989 How God Fills Us Up at Low Points of Life

Session 3

By Jill Briscoe

[Session begins with 13 minutes of musical worship. Jill Briscoe speaks at 13:21]

Thank you, Ken, very much indeed. The last time we were together was in Lausanne. And what a joy to be led in that huge convention. More countries than have ever met before in the history of the world for anything, more than the Olympics, more than the United Nations, met to decide if we could finish the job by the year 2000. And we were led in that great convention by Ken Medema. The music, it was just something that I know Stuart and I will never be the same again from that experience. It's great to know that we can share this together.

What an introduction. I don't even need to read the scriptures. You know the story. You've had the scriptures sung to you. You've had the scene set. We've peeked around the corner of the verse and seen the women standing in the shadows. We've seen the clothes they wore. We've seen the things they were up to. We've smelt the smells in the kitchen, haven't we? God has spoken to us and set the scene and I want to come right off that and talk about worship.

Here again, "You're Equipped to do His Will" poster behind me. "Equipped to do his will." And so often we think of the equipment that we need in technical terms. My--the facts I need to accumulate. Yes, that's important. The training, the experience I need to glean. I need to get out there and do these things in the streets and get involved with youth work or social work or whatever it is that I'm preparing for. But I want to say this unequivocally that if we will not give God the time of day in true worship, in terms of giving God a chance with us, a chance to reveal

Himself to us in order that our heart and our mind and our soul is impacted into praise, then there will be no consequent action of any worth at all.

Quite a few years ago, I was asked to write a devotional, a daily devotional. I thought, well, that's all right. I have my daily devotions, and I can do that along with everything else I'm asked to do. And so in a year's time, I'll just give them everything I've done in my daily devotions, and that'll be a book. It seemed quite easy to me. Of course, I didn't realize that a daily devotional writing is harder than any other sort of writing you do. You're given 200 words, you have to find an original thought, a bit of color illustration.

That is not easy. And I discovered a lot of things about myself. Firstly, I discovered I wasn't daily. And Secondly, I discovered I wasn't devotional. So, in two years' time I managed to have that word finished and I can't remember verbatim what I wrote in the front of it, safe to say it said something like "Wing my words, Lord, into the hearts of men, and they will never be winged into the hearts of men unless they have worshiped silenced into ecstasy helmet last down at his feet."

What I write is simply who I am all over a clean page. And who I am is determined, I think, by how much I know about worship. So in other words, what's happening in my worship time ends up being read by people that buy the book in the bookstore. That's scary. That's a challenge.

That's a privilege. So let's talk about worship. There are two sisters here. Mary and Martha. Half of us would say we are Mary's, and half of us would say we are Martha's. Maybe if we were all women, the majority of us would say we were Martha's and 1% would say we were Mary's.

Most men think women are the Mary's. They're the ones that do the praying. We're the ones that do the working. Don't believe it. The women, because of the way we're made, and our femininity, are the detail people. Who else can get five kids to five different locations all at the same time? Who else can cook you a meal and have it all hot at the same time? I leave my husband little packages sometimes when he's home and I'm away, and I leave little notes and footprints on the ground to the fridge pointing in the right direction.

And when he opens the fridge, there are little things written there, and it's all ready to fall off the front shelf into his mouth. Otherwise he never finds it. I do everything I know how to do. But when I come back, he says, "Well, honey, thank you very much." But he said, "how do you get it all hot at the same time? I just can't do that. I get the potato hot and then the peas are cold." He said, "You're women are wonderful." That's because we're Martha's.

We're made, created with detail in mind. And the men think the Mary's are doing the praying. Let me tell you something. We are Martha's and nobody's doing the praying. We'd all better get around to worshiping. The thing about this story that strikes me is this: Calvin said, and it's a new thought to me. And I don't know whether he's right or wrong. But he says Mary was Martha before she was Mary. In other words, don't presume. Mary loved sitting at Jesus feet, looking in his face.

It just came naturally to her. It doesn't come naturally to a sinful human being to worship. It's a choice. Jesus said it. She's chosen that good thing. And we choose to worship. Both Mary and Martha sat at his feet. Because if you read in Luke 10, the account of it, it said Mary also sat at

his feet, meaning that Martha was sitting there already. But there was a difference. Mary sat there long enough to make a difference. And Martha didn't. It's a little like jogging. I don't know if you've ever got into the jogging craze, but there's a wall.

And those of you that jog or run know what I mean. You jog and jog and jog until you're just about dying. And then suddenly you're through the wall and you could go 10 miles. It's an invisible wall. And I believe there's a wall like that in worship as we begin to pray. And as we begin to meditate. And as we begin to worship over the word of God, there is a wall, and we sort of get to just be so glad until this is over.

And we're panting and we're thinking, Well, I know I got to do this, but, boy, this is just killing me. And we don't stay there long enough to get through the wall. I think most of the Christian world does this. But if you'd only stay there long enough to make a difference, you get through the wall and you never want to get up off your knees again. Mary chose to stay there long enough to make a difference. Martha stayed there, but not long enough to do what Mary was doing.

Well, what was Mary doing? She was learning the cross. She was learning the cross. She was the only one that got it. Twelve disciples didn't have a clue. This was the last time Jesus had to tell Mary and Martha what was going to happen. It was his last visit to their home. He had come to die, and Martha was worried about the soup. Now, if you worry about the soup long enough, you'll end up in it. That's what she did. And she drew a rebuke from Christ.

Mary had given her heart to Jesus. That's where it all began. And so had Martha. And I know that you have given your heart to Jesus. I gave my heart to Jesus years and years and years ago as a student. And I remember the day that I did, taking a pen and writing my first bit of devotional response to what had happened. It was a little bit of reaction because my life had been gray, and I wrote, "No more gray, Lord. Colors crowd my life, soft colors of love. No more sterile air, fresh winds blow through my mind. See my thoughts now falling into line like rows of orderly soldiers marching merrily to war, sure of victory, fighting for a cause. No more empty spaces to live in. Jesus is here. Sweet friend, determining to make me his confidante. No more gray, Lord. Colors crowd my life. Sweet colors of love."

And I was born into the forever family, never to be the same again. And I tell you, from the very first week I came to know Christ, I realized it was a choice to sit at his feet long enough to let him make the difference. So I gave my heart to Jesus like Mary and Martha gave their heart to Jesus. And then I gave my home to him like Mary and Martha gave their home to him.

You can give your heart to Christ, but never give your home to him. Giving your home to him involves all sorts of things, like choosing the right companion for this earth. That's very important. And I remember both Stuart and I making a commitment, saying, as for me, in my house, we will serve the Lord, and we're going to marry someone that shares that focus and God in His Grace brought us together. But giving our home to Jesus is a very practical thing. It means the world destroying it.

For twelve years, the youth of England marched through our home, kicked their shoes off, made themselves at home. I can't think of anything precious I've got left that wasn't broken. The couch was wrecked, the carpet was worn out. It costs to give your home to Christ, Mary and Martha knew that. But they gave it to him anyway. I remember the day that Stuart and I learnt what it really meant to give our home to Jesus. He had been preaching to probably three or four little old ladies in Church and I was home with a baby and I had forgotten, seeing I'd suddenly got married and I was enjoying being a wife and a mom, that my identity did not get lost in my husband, but rather I was still a disciple of Jesus Christ, and I had a job to do as well.

And so I was bugging him to do the job that I was supposed to do. There were a whole lot of kids outside a coffee bar called the Cat's Whisker opposite. And I kept saying, to Stuart, what are you bothering with these three little old ladies in church? Why don't you come down, you're six foot above contradiction in that pulpit of yours and meet the people? And he said, Jill, I'll do what I feel I've got to do. You do what you need to do. They're outside our window.

You're home. I'm not. You go get them. And I said, But I'm your good little evangelical wife living in our nice little evangelical home. I have a nice little evangelical baby to look after. And I realized that I had a choice. And it was in worship that God said to me, "Get to work," because worship impacts you into praise, which leads you to action. And so I found three little teenagers that were willing to do what I wasn't. And I sent them across the road. Well, they had a fight.

They closed the coffee bar. It was a knife fight. It wasn't very nice. And my three well trained teenagers, I was watching very closely, praying for them, which was really nice of me. Panicked.

And one of them said to this mob who didn't have anywhere to go. It was raining. It was England. See that lady watching over there out of that window. She's invited all of you back for a free cup of tea. To my horror, watching with my baby in my arms. I saw this mob come over the street, into our house, up into the bedrooms everywhere.

And I know I heard God chuckle. And he said, "Jill, never do that again." And I said, "I'll never do it again." Well, midnight, 1 o'clock came. Stuart was still not back. He'd been preaching to three little old ladies somewhere away. He came home. He couldn't get in. There was no room. He knocked on the door. He hammered on the door. He tried to open it, and a longhaired guy with hair in all different colors opened the door and said, "Sorry, mate. There's no room" and shut the door.

So here we were. Eventually they let him in. And for Stuart and I, that was a turning point in the whole of our lives. Very shortly after that, we left the business world and went to work among those young people. We gave our home to Jesus. If you're thinking of getting married, ask yourself a question. It's one thing to give your heart to Jesus. Are you willing for what it means to open up your family, to let other people sleep in your kids' beds and your bed? To take the risk of bringing contaminated people into your house now more than in my day and age, people with AIDS sleeping in your spare bed?

Are you willing for that? Giving your heart to Jesus means all of that and more. And you'll never do it unless you know what it is to worship. So she gave her heart to Jesus. They gave their home to Jesus. They gave their home to Jesus. But attitudes began to come apart. And that's where we

have to look at Martha for a minute. Poor Martha. We heard about her. Ken sang so incredibly visually to us about her. "Martha, Martha, You're careful and concerned about many things." Now, Jesus did not rebuke her activity.

He rebuked her anxiety about her activity. She was worried. She got so worried. She got irritated with her sister, with the Lord, with the whole world, with the disciples. Jesus and Mary and Martha weren't sitting in lonely isolation here. There were twelve disciples, hungry men hanging around. There were all the hangers on. There was the leper. There was the disreputable person. There was all the gorging people that wanted to come and see somebody that had been healed. Their house was bursting at the seams. And yet here was Jesus expecting Mary and Martha, women at that, to sit at the rabbi's feet and be taught. Never been done before.

The disciples didn't like the whole idea, but Mary stayed there long enough to make the difference. And Martha didn't. Jesus rebuked her and said, "You've got to choose to do it, Martha. You've got to choose to do it. Don't be distracted by all the serving that you're offering to me." And that's the hassle of being a Christian and being equipped to serve. Can you walk through your Christian service and your Christian life not being distracted by the very service that you're rendering? You know, you can come to love the work of the Lord more than the Lord of the work.

It really is possible. I love everything I do. I love it. And I have to watch that. Do I love what I do more than the one that I do it for? That's a trap. It's a time trap that you can get into. Well, God dealt with them. They had to give their heart to Jesus, their home to Jesus and their hurts to

Jesus. Because Lazarus the brother, died. If you remember, he died. And they couldn't understand why Jesus hadn't come and healed him. Well, eventually he did turn up, but it was a little late.

He was three days dead. He stood outside the tomb, if you remember. And he said, "Lazarus, come forth" and he did, which must have been quite a shock to everybody standing there. And then Mary and Martha were amazed because they learnt the greater thing. And the reason that Jesus doesn't come at our first prayer, perhaps, is because he wants us to learn the greater things. Sometimes if he had come immediately, they would have learned that he was the great healer. Well, they already knew that. They didn't know he was the resurrection and the life.

And sometimes God stays three days in the same place and doesn't come and answer your prayers for a loved one, for that very reason that we need to learn the greater thing. Mary sat still in the house. She was so hurt she didn't even come and meet Jesus. Jesus had to send for her. Mary. Martha, because of who? Martha was, rushed out and said "why weren't you here when I wanted you?" But Mary sat still in the house and she wasn't worshipping folks. She wasn't worshipping.

She was sitting there saying, "Why, why didn't he come?" She had to learn to come and give her "why's" to Jesus. I love Ruth Graham's poem I lay my "why's" before your throne in worship, kneeling. My heart too hurt for sense. My mind beyond all feeling. And worshipping realized that I, in knowing you, don't need a "why." Worshipping, realized that I, in knowing you, don't need a

"why." We have to lay our "whys" before His throne. And that happens in worship. So they gave their heart to Jesus.

They gave their home to Jesus. They gave their hurts to Jesus. But it's in Mary's example, not Martha's. At the end of that story that we see they gave their hopes to Jesus. Mary, particularly. Mary had got the message. Jesus had said, "Mary, I'm coming this time to die." "What do you mean, Master?" Can you imagine all the bustle around her? Martha screaming at her to come and help with the meal? The disciples murmuring, couldn't understand why he was bothering teaching something to a woman, even though it was Mary and Martha and they respected them.

And Mary's agonized, unbelieving unbelief. "What do you mean, crucified? What do you mean?" "I've come to die. I'm going to be crucified. This is it. The last time I'll be here. Do you understand?" And Mary understood shortly afterwards, in another house, on another day in Simon the Leper's house, Mary understanding got a little box, her Alabaster box of ointment, very precious. And brought it and broke it and anointed his feet. She unbraided her hair, a thing that no woman ever did apart from for her husband in the bedroom.

In public, a woman never ever unbraided her hair. But Mary did. And when she'd unbraided it, crying, her tears falling on his anointed feet. She wiped them with her hair. And it's this that I want you to focus on this picture. This incredible picture. As I was worshiping over this picture, I like to capture those thoughts for myself and I've simply copied out a few things from my prayer book. Why couldn't she use cheap oil, clean towels? A bowl of water, like anyone else? She could have used cheap oil. Spikenard was worth a small fortune.

She could have wiped his feet with common towels. Long, thick hair unbraided in such wanton way gives wrong impressions to the watching men. Such love should not be spilled upon a rabbi's feet. Such waste. Cheap oil. She could have used cheap oil and common towels. And what's amiss with water in a bowl? Tears belong in private places, never shared in public show, upon a face exposed in grief that somehow finds relief. Why couldn't she find cheap oil? Couldn't she use cheap oil, common towels and a bowl of water like anyone else? Like me, for instance.

And worshipping, I ask myself, how many times, Jill, how many times have you used cheap oil, clean towels? When was the last time? In other words, I let my hair down for Jesus? I think of Martha watching that incredible thing that she did. And I wrote about her. You asked me, muddled Martha that I am, what Jesus' feet feel like within my hands. What tears wet upon my raptured face reflect the stolen moments never planned? That he and I talk on past midnight hour, not thinking, neither caring for the day that I may see his face, and seeing, know that I can never, never look away. O, may you find me at your feet, dear Lord, unbraiding years of tidy, terse, cold prayer.

Yes. Ask me, when was last I washed your feet with tears and wiped them with my hair? And I stand in front of you kids today and publicly I ask myself that question. When was the last time, Lord, that I really worshiped? When was the last time I understood about the cross? And when was the last time I broke my little box in worship indicative of a broken heart and anointed your body? Because that's what she was doing. She understood Jesus was going to die and he was going to be crucified.

And all they did was take the body off the cross and shake it into the hole. The victim had dug before he ever got put on it. He didn't get anointed. He didn't get a decent burial, so she would do it now. She would do it now. She was the only one that understood. As we come to the end of this session, I want to ask you something. What is your little box? For me, the little box that needed to be broken has been many things down the year.

This was Mary's marriage box. She was an unmarried lady. It was her dowry. It was a very expensive ointment. If she didn't get married, she could live off that. She broke her marriage box. And I've had to do that in our ministry. And the fragrance of that ointment will fill the house and everybody that comes around will have a sense of Jesus when the box is broken. For some of you, it will be something else. What is it? A relationship that needs to be broken? What is your little box?

You will only ever be able to give it in worship. As you hold his feet in your hands as you water his feet with your tears. And as you embrace your hair and dry them. It's an amazing thing. Worship. What happens there. Worship, funnily enough, is work. It takes time. Worship is adoration. Worship is understanding. Worship is appropriation. Worship is a thousand things. But if you want to be equipped to work for God, you've got to be equipped through worship. And I would just tell you what I'm telling myself.

You know so often I bring these messages and I know that God is standing here next to me saying, "Oh, listen to you. Very nice. Yes. I hope you're saying it strongly enough." And I know very well that I'm speaking to myself as well. Because I know this in effect, I know because of

what happens in your hearts. If my words are going to wing their way into your hearts, they have to be silenced into ecstasy. Home at last, down at his feet. Before I ever dare stand up here on a platform. And whatever you do for God has to come out of your worship. Are you equipped for service? What's your little box?

Are you willing because of what you understand in worship of the cross, like Mary, to break it? If you do, the fragrance of that sacrifice will fill the house and you'll make an impact forever. Jesus said, the thing this woman has done will be told in the whole world. Leave her alone, he said. When they all got after it. When the disciples got after it, leave her alone. The thing this woman has done shall be told in all the world. And isn't that what I'm doing?

Isn't that what Ken did? He wrote a song about her. I'm preaching a message about her. Jesus was right. Do you want somebody to be talking about you in 2000 years from now? Then learn to worship. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, it's easy to say and hard to do. But, Lord, I thank you for what Mary particularly has meant in my life. Thank you for the struggle that I've had to bring my little box, my marriage box, and many other little boxes through the year. And put them at your feet and anoint your feet with my sacrifice.

And thank you for those worship experiences those times. And thank you for the fragrance of the ointment that fills the temple of our lives when we bring our little boxes to you. And Lord, there are many thoughts and prayers going up from this gathering now. And in this quiet moment, I

ask you to accept the little boxes that are being brought down from the attic of people's lives presented to you. May there be repercussions impact to the four corners of the world.