

## Christmas or Chaos-mas?

(video transcript)

By Karen Spiegelberg

[Karen humming the tune, "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year"]



It is a most wonderful time of year, isn't it? But you know I really should be getting started on my Christmas cards and shopping—and I can't remember if I ordered that kringle for the choir party—and I—I can't get these lights untangled... Maybe the Grinch had the right idea about Christmas. Maybe I'll just go live in a cave on Mount Crumpit.

Hi, I'm Karen Spiegelberg. Welcome to A WORD for Women—a show by women and for women where we build each other up in our amazing and wonderful God-given roles in life!

Does this scene look all too familiar to you as you prepare for Christmas? Since most of the Christmas preparations fall on women we end up acting more like Martha of the Bible than her sister, Mary. Remember the story in Luke chapter 10 where Jesus came to visit at the home of the two sisters, Martha and Mary?

Verses 38 through 42 read, "As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Now there's nothing wrong with having some Martha-aspect to our lives. I mean we would have done the same thing had someone been visiting our home, right? Had the house cleaned, had the meal prepared, wanted to have everything nice for our guest—we Martha's are just that way. We look after all the people and details in our life. We entertain, pay bills, clean, organize, cook. We keep families functioning, offices organized, church events running, and households humming. And then, through Christmas into the mix and even the most mild-mannered Martha can pretty kerbobbled. Why? Because then we're mostly responsible for the decorating, the gift shopping, the wrapping, the cards, the cookies, and the entertaining—phew! That would be enough to send even little Cindy Lou Hoo to live on Mount Crumpit. But take heart, and listen on!

You too can have a “Mary” Christmas! Jesus had told Martha that what Mary had chosen was better, and that it would not be taken away from her. What did he mean by that? That Martha was distracted by too many things, while Mary was satisfied with the one thing needful—being at the feet of Jesus. Or being in his Word, listening to him speak to our hearts at this very special time of the year.

Tsk, now I can hear you saying, “Yeah right, easier said than done.”

But it can be done if we start out each Christmas season in the right spirit, in the right mood. Let’s take time early in the Advent season to prepare our hearts by carving out time to sit with our Bibles or to read an Advent devotional book or to have fellowship with women at an Advent event. Then we can build our Christmas on that renewed and strengthened heart. It will help us see more clearly what the priorities of the season are and simplify the demands that we tend to place on ourselves.

Now, here are some tips for simplifying your Christmas:

- Decorations—don’t put up as many. On the outside, your house doesn’t visible from Mars to be beautiful! And on the inside, start with the Nativity set and build around that. And remember whatever goes up, must come down so not putting up as many saves time and stress after Christmas too.
- Cookies—do a cookie exchange with neighbors or coworkers so you don’t have to bake as much, or don’t back at all. I have a friend who said she really stressed out about baking cookies but she just thought she had to do it every year. Once she quit she said she was a “happy camper.” And that’s a quote!
- Christmas cards—don’t send out as many or don’t send them at all. There’s no Christmas card police that is going to bang on your door and arrest you if you don’t send any. Or send a greeting at a different time of the year. I know a family that sends out a letter at Easter instead of Christmas. Have someone help you with stamps and return labels. My mom asked my 15-year-old nephew to put stamps on the envelopes and he was happy to help.
- How about gifts—if you don’t already, start drawing names in your family. Use gift cards to cut out on shopping for the perfect gift—set a budget and stick to it, because going over it can be stressful. And as it gets closer to Christmas, don’t even think about picking up that one little extra item that you don’t need. Drop the ornament! Or don’t “drop” the ornament, you might break it... Set the ornament down and back away from the display.
- Alright, food—ask guests to bring a dish to pass. People really like to do this. Also, cut back on the amount of food you serve. It will ease your work and save everyone’s waist lines.

We don’t have to everything to have a perfect Christmas. Remember, even if we did nothing Christmas would still come and it would still be perfect. Why? Because Christmas is in our hearts. Christmas means celebrating the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And no one or nothing can diminish that.

Thank you for joining us on A WORD for Women. Now lighten up on yourselves all you Martha’s of the world! And have yourselves a “Mary” little Christmas!

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