

KATIE M. REID

Made Like Martha

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Good News

for the Woman Who
Gets Things Done



FOREWORD BY LISA-JO BAKER



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MADE LIKE MARTHA

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To Adam.

Thank you for loving this modern Martha, even when it's hard work. Thank you for teaching me about grace—without using many words. Thank you for sitting with me in a hammock on Wednesday nights at 9:00 p.m.; it is one of the best things we do.

To Brooklyn, Kaleos, Banner, Isaiah, and Larkin.

You are five of my favorite chapters in the story God is writing. I love you more than words.

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As they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word. But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me." But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

—LUKE 10:38–42, NASB

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Contents

Foreword by Lisa-Jo Baker	xi
Company's Coming!	I

PART I: *Striving*

1 The Big To-Do	5
<i>God's Love for the Doer's Heart</i>	
2 The Worry-and-Worship Conflict.	15
<i>Laying Down "What If" and Lifting Up "Even If"</i>	
3 These Shoulders	33
<i>The Heavy Load That Dependable Daughters Carry</i>	
<i>A Hired-Help Mentality Assessment</i> 51	

PART II: *Sitting*

4 How Much Is Required?	55
<i>The Completed Work of the Cross</i>	
5 Are You in a Swivel Chair or Comfy Recliner?	71
<i>Grace with No Strings Attached</i>	
6 Possessing What's Already Yours	85
<i>Enjoying Your Spiritual Inheritance</i>	
<i>A Beloved Daughter's Mentality Assessment</i> 104	

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PART III: *Standing*

7	The Middle Ground Between Striving and Slowing.	109
	<i>Stewarding Well Without Overdoing It</i>	
8	Easy Does It.	131
	<i>Rest for the Try-Hard Soul</i>	
9	Sit Down as You Stand Up.	145
	<i>Living Settled Even When You're Busy</i>	
10	Dear Modern Martha.	161
	<i>Serving from a Place of Strength and Peace</i>	
	<i>The Beloved Daughter's Decree</i>	167

Bible Study for Individuals and/or Groups

1	A Loved Heart, a Worshipful Soul (Romans 8; Revelation 4).	175
2	A Daughter's Heart, a Redeemed Soul (Galatians 4; Hebrews 9).	183
3	A Grace-Filled Heart, a Secure Soul (Ephesians 1; 1 Peter 1).	193
4	A Hopeful Heart, a Peaceful Soul (Galatians 5; Hebrews 4).	201
5	A Settled Heart, a Freed Soul (Ephesians 2; Romans 5).	209
	Acknowledgments.	217
	Notes	221

Foreword

I grew up in a home where my mom died a week after I turned eighteen and my dad fled his grief in a shotgun remarriage, which ended in a quickie divorce. I felt the bits and pieces of my life dissolving between my fingers and feared that if I didn't grab the reins, no one else would. This is not a wise choice for a college kid. Or a grown-up. Or a grandma. But it would take me a couple more decades to learn that. The hard way.

I believed that if I could will people into living a certain way, making certain choices, talking in certain kinds of tones and voices, then I could make life better for them. But really, what I meant deep down in my bones and DNA is that if I could make them behave a certain way, life would be better for me.

Katie and I have this in common: the need to take charge and take initiative and take all need for faith out of the equation—because we've worked hard enough on behalf of everyone around us, including God. We've got this, and we've got ourselves convinced that if we want things done right, we've got to do them ourselves.

I think it goes without saying that this is exhausting.

My shoulders, like Katie's, have sagged for years under the weight of my self-imposed obligations, as well as the weight of resistance I encountered in my siblings, my kids, and my husband, who weren't interested in having their lives dictated to them. But for the longest time, I didn't know how to let go. I didn't know God well enough to believe that He was capable of holding us all together when I'd lived through us all crashing apart.

Katie describes it like this: "It is a good thing to be reliable, but there is a

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sneaky shift that can happen from being responsible to putting ourselves in charge of things that aren't ours to manage."

I've spent years consciously trying to stop taking control of the things that aren't mine to manage. And of all the lessons I've learned, the most important is that other people are not ours to manage. They're ours to love. Ours to forgive. Ours to lead and lean on and lean into. They're ours to embrace and accept and challenge and befriend and learn from. *But they are not ours to manage.*

Other people—all of them—belong to the God who designed their blueprints, their souls, and their stories. And as it turns out, I am not the boss of any of that. This was a shocking discovery to me. But the relief! The massive relief of not having to carry the weight of every decision everyone else around me was making. It was so huge that I nearly toppled over once it had fallen off my back.

And reading Katie's words was like rereading my own story of discovering this truth—the truth that maybe should be obvious but certainly wasn't to me. Maybe it's not obvious to you either. Maybe you're holding on with white knuckles to a vision of how you want the people around you to look, act, and decide—and you're about to pass out from the frustration of it all. Listen, let Katie help you loosen your grip on what comes next. This book will walk you through the tender process of first simply letting go of the decisions that aren't yours to make in the first place and then trusting a much more trustworthy Architect to catch it all in His safe hands.

It's probably easier and more difficult than you expect.

But it will be liberating. I am certain.

This isn't about changing your gifts, your drive, or your ability to multitask. This is about unloading the unnecessary—those things that have snuck onto your to-do list that really aren't yours to do. This is about making room for all the ways in which you are wired to excel, without being held back by

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all the ways in which you feel you fail. Because there's no such thing as perfect people, perfect performances, or perfect endings—not when it comes to ourselves, the people around our tables, in our offices, or branching out from our family trees.

Here's to letting Katie walk us through what that might look like, in real time. I believe she is a trusted guide, and her goal is the same as our Father God's: to set us free, so that we might be released into the fullness of the unique and phenomenal talents He has built into our DNA. Not to change that but rather to see it multiplied way beyond what our limited lists could ever have asked or imagined.

—Lisa-Jo Baker, best-selling author of *Never Unfriended*,
from her dining room table in Hanover, Maryland

Company's Coming!

I am determined to make a good impression. A whirlwind of activity, like a ceiling fan on steroids, precedes the arrival of our honored guest.

I bark orders. "Hurry up! We're running out of time, people!" The to-do list is long and our company will be here soon.

Declutter.

Swish toilets.

Vacuum.

Make sure dinner doesn't burn!

Cut fresh flowers for a centerpiece.

"Who spilled cereal and didn't clean it up? You guys are killing me here!" Hop to it, step it up, get it done. Marching in double time, we feel frustration build as we dash to get the house presentable. "Set the table, and please remember to use the good silverware."

Ding-dong.

I wipe away a bead of sweat as I cross another item off the list.

Deep breath.

Trying to forget the careless words spoken as we scrambled to tidy up, I put on a happy face before I open the poppy-orange door. "Oh, hello there. So honored you could come."

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I spy a stray sock and kick it under the shoe rack like a ninja.

"I'm glad you invited me over," he says.

"Of course. Anything for you," I gush.

"May I sit down?"

"Sure! Make yourself at home."

He walks in and looks around.

I cringe as I notice a cobweb overhead that I'm afraid he'll point out.

Covertly, I swat it down before following him out of the room. *Big sigh of relief. He didn't seem to notice.* He enters the family room.

"That recliner looks nice," he says.

"Oh, that old thing? Are you sure you want to sit there, Jesus?"

"Absolutely."

He wastes no time making himself comfortable.

"Can I get you something to drink?" I offer.

"Oh, no thank you. I'm good."

"Are you—?"

Buzz! Buzz!

"Oh! That must be the pie. Gotta check it. My sister will keep you company. I have a few more things to get done."

PART I

Striving?



You don't have to
strive for what you
already have.

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I

The Big To-Do

God's Love for the Doer's Heart



You don't have to earn anyone's love anymore.
Believe this: That you are already God's beloved.

—Jennifer Dukes Lee

I am a Martha fan. A lot has been said, written, and broadcast about dear Martha and her sister, Mary, based on their story in Luke 10. But Martha often gets a bad rap. While I'm not here to rehash what's already been discussed, I do want to address the misconception that there is *something wrong* with being like her. After all, Martha welcomed Jesus into her home. Some versions of the Bible say she "opened her home to him" (verse 38, NIV) or "received him into her house" (KJV).

Welcomed. Opened. Received. These words paint a bright picture of hospitality. Martha was probably a mint-on-the-pillow type of hostess. A take-charge woman who accomplished tasks in a timely manner, she was probably the type of gal who managed a myriad of details. She wasn't idle or lazy and likely spent her days in a flurry of activity. When I read about biblical Martha, I envision her as strong and savvy—a to-do list kind of woman.

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Responsible. *Check.*

Capable. *Check.*

Willing. *Check.*

Most of the time I am that way too. And being a woman who handles it all takes its toll. In the mirror I see a modern Martha who finds herself frustrated because she's not wired like biblical Martha's sister. You know, Mary—the sister who chose what was “better” (verse 42, NIV), the “necessary” thing (NASB), the “one thing” (NASB), the “good part” (NASB)? I try to unzip my design as a doer and shed the skin of efficiency because I interpret the passage in Luke to mean that Mary is the poster child for getting it right. Since I spend most of my days bustling instead of sitting at Jesus's feet, I feel as if something is inherently wrong with me. *Mary is right. Martha is wrong. Good Mary. Bad Martha.*

Mary's temperament seems approved. Martha's temperament seems discounted. And because I identify with and live like Martha the doer, I feel wrong—or at least not quite right. I like approval, so you can imagine the tug-of-war that transpires within my soul as I grapple with the Mary ideal versus the Martha reality. But the tension goes further and deeper than that.

Although the lie—that love will be withheld or removed if I don't get “it” right—is buried, I buy into it. (Insert your own “it” here: appearance, job, pants size, housework, marriage, parenting, friendships, and so on.) While getting all these “its” right is important to me, getting faith right is the driving force behind try-hard living. Because daily quiet time, praying without ceasing, and being still are not working out so well, I feel as though my wiring is flawed. I assume that love is limited because I don't measure up.

My friend Brandi shares similar thinking. While recently chaperoning a field trip at a local bounce house, we wasted no time jumping into deep conversation as our kids raced around the inflatable jungle gym. Brandi said that she grew up knowing she needed a Savior, but the idea that God loved her

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and thought she was special sounded crazy. It seemed to her that His fond affection was reserved for those who were more talented, more beautiful, or more holy. She was convinced God's eye did not fall on her as He scanned the great big earth He created. His loving gaze smiled on the missionaries and the pastors and everyone else "doing it right" but not on her—the one who felt like a hot mess and seemed doomed to repeat mistakes.

Brandi also mentioned that several years ago on a particularly heart-wrenching day, she poured out these thoughts to someone she trusted. Despite this woman's assurance that, yes, God did see her and love her, Brandi still struggled to believe it. As Brandi left her meeting with this woman, she went to a drive-through to buy some chili for lunch. As she waited to pay, she checked her appearance in the mirror. Her blotchy face reflected her broken heart. Her bloodshot eyes reflected her broken spirit. She put on sunglasses to mask her hurt. As she reached out to pay for her meal, the woman at the window stopped her. "The person ahead of you paid for your food. She asked me to give you a message: 'God loves you.'"

These were the words Brandi desperately wanted to believe. God provided the spiritual food she hungered for. Jesus loved *her*. She didn't have to improve herself, go into ministry, or alter her temperament to be adored by the One who made her and saved her. In the middle of a taxing day, in the simplest of ways, God assured Brandi of her position in His heart.

Before her drive-through encounter, Brandi felt she had to be more or be someone else to be deemed worthy of God's affections. And I wonder whether Martha felt the same way.

Did Martha try to prove her worth through exemplary behavior? *Look at what I can do! See all I can manage? My shoulders ache, my tone is edgy, but by golly, I get things done.*

That's how I feel sometimes—actually, *many* times. My tense posture is a response to external and internal expectations to do more, be more, and

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look good doing it. Inferiority and superiority duke it out in an ugly feud that leaves me weary and bruised.

Frustrated. *Check.*

Stressed. *Check.*

Overwhelmed. *Check.*

Striving, driving, and producing become the fuel to earn love and stay in good standing with the Savior. My good works become a means to obtaining favor, and I'm afraid they're not good enough. And neither am I. It feels as though my approval is based on how well I perform, and I fear rejection if that performance is subpar.

I cringe at the thought of one of my less-than-stellar days being documented for all to read, analyze, and criticize as Martha's has been throughout the years.

Jesus corrects Martha because she is worried and bothered about many things. When I read the account of Jesus coming to Mary and Martha's home in Luke 10, I usually hear verses 41 and 42 as a scolding from the Lord: "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her." I read between the lines, "*You're not enough. You need to improve to be accepted. You need to try harder to be loved. Do better, be better, Martha.*"

As I said in a guest post on a blog,

I am hard on myself. I constantly critique, over-analyze, and expect more of myself than is humanly possible. I work hard to stay on top of things . . . so that I . . . stay above disapproving gazes.

I strive to be the best woman, the best wife, the best mom, the best friend, and I miss the mark again and again.

Since I walk on a high tightrope of unreasonable expectations, I am positioned to topple at the smallest criticism.

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The kids disobey. I slip.

The laundry isn't put away—ever. I trip.

The book proposal is rejected. I limp.

I fall from the heights and land hard.¹

My worth gets tangled up in my works, so I walk with a spiritual limp. And because I hold myself to the Mary Poppins standard of being “practically perfect in every way,” I am often discouraged. I’m worn out from trying to be everything to everyone and fed up with messing up. Capable is my middle name, yet if I’m honest, I’m a few yeses away from falling apart.

The bustle causes shallow breathing. The hustle produces a preoccupation with self. The scurry gives birth to stress. The hurry makes my body ache. Words lash out. All this pushing tires my soul. The proving steals peace. The multitasking overwhelms. The merry-go-round of striving leaves my head spinning and stomach churning. The kids need me, the husband wants me, work is waiting, dinner needs a plan, the bills need paying, the house needs dusting—wait, I don’t dust or iron (please, no judging). Something’s gotta give! I want to be enough, yet I’ve had enough of this dizzying ride. There must be another way, a better way, off this Ferris wheel of fret.

I can’t bear another lecture or scolding.

I’m tired. And the sleep isn’t as sweet when I try to carry the world on my shoulders, which ache as my thoughts swirl overhead like a tornado.

HIS SIDE

When our kids have bad dreams, they race down the hallway, feet pattering from wood floor to blue shag, as they seek comfort at our bedside. Although I sleep closer to the door, they usually go to my husband’s side of the bed. Sleep deprivation is not my friend, and if I am woken up at night, Mean Lady

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emerges. I have an edge and impatience to my voice. I don't intend to be this way, but a sharp-tongued beast surfaces when provoked.

The other day I told Adam, "The kids need to stop coming in and waking us up! We need to get a full night's sleep."

I anticipated he'd agree, but he said, "We're their parents, and it's our job to comfort them when they need it." Even if it's the middle of the night. Even if it's inconvenient.

Conviction.

Then it came flooding back—the time our son Banner came to my side and I pretended to be asleep so he'd go to Adam's side instead. He was about five years old at the time. In the dark I saw his round face staring at me, seeing whether I was awake. I closed my eyes and stayed quiet, hoping he'd go back to bed.

In the morning I asked Banner why he'd gotten up.

"I just wanted to give you and Dad a hug and tell you I love you."

Adam had received his hug, but I had missed mine.

Conviction.

The Lord used this incident to teach me something—not to condemn me but to graciously reveal a truth about His character that I forget. Often I feel as if God is mad or disappointed because I haven't been good enough or haven't done enough. I assume that He wants to interrupt my well-oiled agenda and have me do something else, something more. Yet, like Banner, He impressed this on me: *What if I just want to tell you I love you? What if I want to wake you and tell you how crazy I am about you? You assume the worst, but what if I just want to spend time with you and remind you of My love?*

Revelation. What if God wasn't asking me to be Mary but instead loved me for being Martha?

It is interesting that Banner is the one whom God used to reveal this—

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the son whose name is a continual reminder of this very idea. “He has brought me to his banquet hall, and his banner over me is love” (Song of Solomon 2:4, NASB).

Jesus sings love over us, whether we are standing, sitting, or sleeping. He displays His affection like a banner. He invites us to unwind in His presence and relax in His care. Although we need sleep, we can experience spiritual rest even when we are awake, even while we are working.

For years I’ve felt guilty for being task oriented. I scold myself for being a doer and then try to improve myself in five easy steps. The thing is, not only are the steps difficult, but they are pretty near impossible. I didn’t choose to be a doer; I was designed to be one. This temperament—this nature—is here to stay. It’s not to be erased but rather to be celebrated and used for God’s glory. Just because we are designed to do doesn’t mean we are inferior or superior to Mary types.

There is nothing wrong with being like Martha or Mary. Both are created by and loved by God. Praise Jesus for both kinds of women! I enjoy my Mary friends. They help me slow down and stay focused on what is truly important when my to-do list threatens to derail my joy. However, I’m equally thankful for my Martha friends. They are my go-to gals for getting things done. One of these friends recently came over and cleaned my fridge until it shone like the top of the Chrysler Building. *Glory!*

DANGEROUS ADDITIVES

Way back in the Garden of Eden, Satan caused doubt to ring in the ears of sister Eve when he questioned and twisted what God had lovingly instructed about not eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (see Genesis 3:1–3). With his words Satan crafted a picture of a God who was holding out on His daughter. Eve also added to what God said (by telling

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the serpent that the fruit couldn't even be touched), kind of like the Judaizers of Jesus's day, who added extra rules to the rules (which bred pride and rebellion).

Satan has done similar things with doers like us. He has exploited this familiar passage about Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38–42 to convince God's doer daughters that our wiring is flawed, causing us to doubt we are wonderfully made. The accuser of our souls has spun these five verses in Scripture to imply that we are not fully loved or acceptable unless we become someone else, someone more. We have bought into the lie that we are supposed to improve on this God-given design because it isn't as adored as Mary's is. But this is not true!

Jesus never asked Martha to be Mary, and He didn't ask you to be either. He simply pointed out that you do not have to serve from a place of striving and worry, because He is already enough for you. He is not holding out on you. We have added words to what Jesus said and have compromised parts of who He created us to be in the process. Enough is enough! Pointing out one behavior to improve on is not the same as criticizing the totality of who you are. Let's stop agreeing with the serpent and others who echo his slippery sentiments.

Let's not view this passage in Luke as condemnation but as an invitation to freedom. Let's stand together, confident in who we are and who we belong to. Our doing isn't the problem. But our motivation for doing is where things get messy. And we aren't a fan of messes, are we?

Jesus lovingly reminds us of the importance of receiving, not just doing. He invites us to breathe deeply with the lungs He's laced together.

So let's pause. Here at the beginning, let's take a deep, cleansing breath—the in-through-the-top-of-our-heads-and-out-through-the-bottom-of-our-toes kind.

When was the last time you received the love of the Lord, no strings at-

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tached, without condition? Rest for a moment, right here amid the mess. Tune in to guilt-free grace, singing a lullaby to your hardworking heart.

Modern Martha **Mandy Scarr**

[My daughter's] middle name is Abigail. It means "my father's joy." Together [my husband and daughter] have begun to teach me of the Father's unconditional love in ways no one else has ever been able to speak into my heart. The way he looks at her, the way he cherishes her, the way he protects her. The way she finds peace and comfort in his arms ... home even. He's that way with [our son] too—nothing is really that different, but there is just something there between this girl and her Daddy that goes deeper. Their relationship, it's feeding her soul. Being a witness to their love is beautiful for a girl like me, a girl who struggles to understand the vastness of my heavenly Father's love towards me; a girl who wrestles with understanding His perfect fulfillment of the role of Father in my life because of wounds and scars and pain associated with that title. ... Together they are teaching me what my soul longs to hear ... that I am my Father's joy, just as I am, exactly as He made me. Oh how my heart hungers to know this at its core with unfailing belief. I am my Father's joy and the apple of His eye. And guess what ... so are you, beloved. So are you.²

It Is Finished: For You

There is much to be done each day. Take a few moments to jot down what's currently stressing you out.

Although there are many things to do, the greatest to-do has already been completed. Read Isaiah 53 and John 19:28–30 and record what Jesus has accomplished on your behalf.

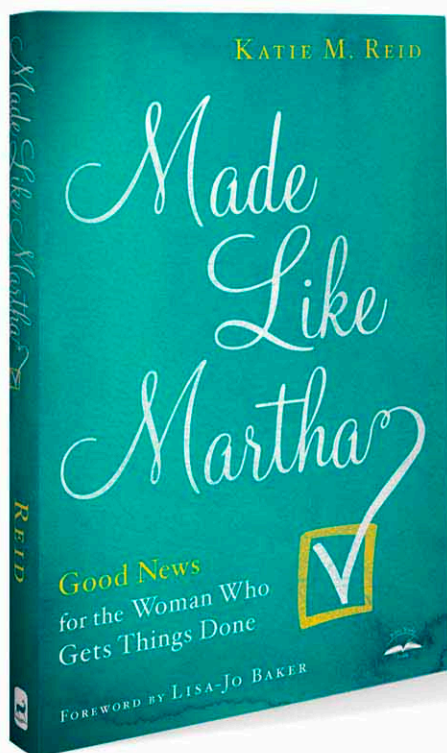
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