

COME AS YOU ARE

30 AUGUST 2026

SUMMARY

Drawing from the stories of Mary and Martha in Luke 10 and John 11, this Message explores the invitation God extends to every person to come into relationship with Him exactly as they are, without pretense or spiritual performance. Through Martha's frustration, grief, and persistent faith, the Message demonstrates that human emotion, doubt, and disappointment do not disqualify us from encountering God. Rather, God meets us in the middle of our mess and uses those uncomfortable seasons of waiting to expand our understanding of who He truly is. The central challenge is to stop allowing our circumstances and feelings to define God, and instead allow the revealed character of God to reframe our circumstances. Relationship with God does not require us to arrive polished or prepared, but it does transform us as we remain in it.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- God invites us into relationship with Him regardless of our emotional, spiritual, or circumstantial state
- Martha's story shows that honesty and frustration directed toward God are not signs of weak faith but of genuine relationship
- Our human experiences can cause us to make God too small by interpreting His character through our circumstances rather than interpreting our circumstances through His character
- Waiting and discomfort are sometimes deliberate tools God uses to stretch our faith and expand our understanding of who He is
- Faith and disappointment can coexist in the same moment, as seen when Martha declares both grief and trust in the same breath
- Coming as we are does not mean staying as we are; genuine relationship with God produces transformation
- We must be careful not to place God in a "Jesus-shaped box" that limits what we believe He is capable of.
- Persistent relationship with God, even through frustration and grief, is the model Martha demonstrates and the model we are called to follow

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

- Luke 10:38-42, in which Jesus visits the home of Mary and Martha, and Martha's distraction and frustration are met with gentle redirection rather than rejection
- John 11:17-27, in which Martha encounters Jesus after the death of her brother Lazarus, expressing both grief and faith, and Jesus reveals Himself as the resurrection and the life

STORIES:

- Brigitte Downes's son Emmett experienced severe abdominal pain during a school soccer game, leading to a hospital visit.
- Brigitte Downes injured her hand during a Tuesday night netball game, tore a ligament, and spent four hours in the emergency department, reflecting on how exhausting weeks can drain our spiritual reserves and lead us toward performance-based prayer rather than genuine connection with God
- Brigitte Downes recalled hosting a family gathering after her daughter's First Holy Communion, becoming so consumed with serving guests that she missed the communal joy of the event, directly paralleling Martha's distraction in Luke 10
- Brigitte Downes described her first day standing alone in front of a classroom as a new teacher, feeling unqualified despite being fully certified, as an illustration of the gap between what we believe about ourselves and what God has already declared over us
- The biblical narrative of Lazarus dying while Jesus deliberately waited two days before coming is used to explore the tension between God's apparent absence and His purposeful, sovereign timing

COME AS YOU ARE

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

This guide is designed to help your small group dive deeper into the message.

OPENING PRAYER

Invite the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and open hearts to God's transforming work. Pray the IMPACTERS Community Prayer .

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Opening

1. Think about a time you felt like you had to "get yourself together" before you could pray or come to God. What was driving that feeling?
2. The Message opened with the idea of carrying God with us everywhere we go as His dwelling place. How does that idea sit with you this week?

Going Deeper

3. In Luke 10:38-42, Martha is busy, frustrated, and openly venting to Jesus about her sister. What stands out to you about how Jesus responds to her? What does His response tell us about how He handles our honesty?
4. In John 11:17-27, Martha says to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died," but then immediately follows it with a statement of faith. Have you ever experienced that tension where faith and disappointment exist in the same breath? What did that feel like?
5. The Message made this observation about Martha: "She is still talking to him. She hasn't walked away. Instead, she carries that bag of hurt, disappointment, and she lays it directly at his feet and says, help me." What do you think keeps people from doing that? What makes it hard to bring the real stuff to God?
6. The Message said: "We should all bring our feelings to God, but we shouldn't allow our feelings to tell us who God is." How do you personally navigate that line? Is it easy or difficult to separate how you feel from what you believe to be true about God?
7. Jesus deliberately waited two days before going to Lazarus. How do you respond to the idea that God sometimes allows us to wait in discomfort in order to stretch our faith and expand our understanding of who He is?
8. The Message described a "Jesus-shaped box," the idea that we can restrict God to only what we think He is capable of based on our current understanding. Have you ever caught yourself doing this? What did it look like?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

9. The Message asked: "Are you bringing the real you to God, or a version of you that you think God wants to see?" Which one do you tend to bring, and why?
10. Where in your life right now are you most tempted to interpret God's goodness through your circumstances rather than allowing who God has revealed Himself to be to interpret your circumstances?
11. Martha's story is encouraging because she keeps coming back. She comes when she is frustrated, she comes when she is grieving, and she keeps showing up. What helps you keep coming back to God even when things are hard?

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

This Week, Choose at Least One:

1. **Come as you actually are in prayer.** Set aside time this week to pray without a structure or script. Instead of starting with what you think a good prayer sounds like, start with where you actually are. Be honest. Bring the frustration, the tiredness, the doubt, or the joy. Let it be a real conversation.
2. **Identify your Jesus-shaped box.** Spend some time reflecting on whether there is an area of your life where you have placed limits on what you believe God can do. Write it down. Then ask God to expand your understanding of who He is beyond what your current experience has allowed.
3. **Notice where you are performing versus connecting.** This week, pay attention to moments in your faith life where you are going through the motions rather than genuinely connecting with God. When you notice it, stop and ask yourself: what is the real thing I need to bring to Him right now?
4. **Practice staying in conversation with God.** Martha never walked away. This week, when something hard happens, make a deliberate choice to bring it to God in the moment rather than waiting until you feel more composed or more faithful. Even a one-sentence honest prayer counts.
5. **Share the real with someone in your group.** Vulnerability in community mirrors vulnerability with God. This week, tell someone in your small group one thing that is actually going on for you, not the polished version.

CLOSING PRAYER

The Message closed with these words:

"God wants to be welcomed into the ordinary places of our lives. He wants the real relationship, not the performance."

Take a moment as a group to sit with that. Then close in prayer, inviting each person to come to God exactly as they are in this moment, bringing whatever they are carrying into His presence.