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Luke 10:38-42

Five Love Languages: Quality Time

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Luke 10:38-42 (New Revised Standard Version)

Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.” But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.”

We have been spending the last weeks talking about the five love languages that Gary Chapman shares in his book, The Five Love Languages: words of affirmation, (loving through what we say and how we say it), receiving gifts (tangible, symbolic expressions of love), acts of service (love in action), physical touch (loving through contact), and quality time (love through presence). Chapman says that we all experience and communicate love differently. Every one of us has one or two of the five love languages that we primarily identity with. If you do not know your love language, I want to encourage you to go online to [www.5lovelanguages.com](http://www.5lovelanguages.com) and take a quick quiz. And the hope is that by talking about each of the love languages we will better be able to love. Love is a basic human need. In his book, The Five Love Languages, Gary Chapman shares these words, “Married or single, young or old, every human has the emotional need to feel loved. When this need is met, we move out to reach our potential for God and our potential for good in the world. However, when we feel unloved, we struggle just to survive.”

We are a people saved by grace who are called to love. Our life is a gift to God and we are called to love one another, to respect all people, and to share with those in need. So, today we talk about quality time.

To someone whose love language is quality time, nothing says “I love you,” like full, undivided attention. Being there for this type of person is critical, but really being there—with the TV off, fork and knife down, and all chores and tasks on standby—makes them feel truly special and loved. Distractions, postponed dates, or the failure to listen can be especially hurtful.

You might think taking a friend, a coworker, your child, or your significant other to the coffee shop or to get some ice cream is not a big deal. You might think you are just hanging out, but you might be speaking the other person’s love language. And they need quality time in order to feel loved.

Jesus spends a great deal of time expressing love through quality time. In the Walk to Emmaus story where it is Easter Sunday and two of the disciples are heading home distraught and hopeless. A stranger comes up alongside them and begins to ask them questions, drawing them out, listening to their heartbreak. Then the stranger shares with them the scriptures about the Messiah, and the salvation that the Messiah brings. Time passes. It grows dark. The disciples are going to stop for the night and invite the stranger to spend more time with them over a meal. Towards the end of the meal, the stranger takes the bread and breaks it. Their eyes are opened and they realize Jesus is alive. Jesus spent quality time with these men because it was the best way for them to hear and receive the love of Jesus.

Jesus shares quality time with the woman at the well in John 4. In the ancient world, men didn’t speak to women. Rabbis didn’t teach outcasts. Jews and Samaritans were enemies. Yet Jesus takes a radical step to spend quality time with a woman at a well and as a result her whole village comes to faith.

And in the story we heard today about Mary and Martha, Mary shares quality time with Jesus. She sits at Jesus’ feet. And Martha, whose love language was probably Acts of Service keeps moving and cleaning and cooking. Worry and distraction have taken over and Jesus has to talk Martha back down. Worry and distraction are the enemies of quality time. They steal our joy and our ability to be present to another human being. A loved one is sharing an important feeling, but our mind is far away worrying about the project that’s due, the bills yet to be paid.

And quality time is loving someone enough to lay aside the worry and distraction in order to be fully present. Drawing near and drawing the other person out. God is all about quality time. God doesn’t just show up once in a while, God is present always. God draws near in Jesus Christ and draws us out through the prompting of the Holy Spirit. God is in it for the long haul, through the good and the bad and the ugly. God desires a deep, intimate relationship with us, a relationship rooted in being present to one another, in quality time.

Quality time often results in quality conversation. Quality Time is listening intentionally, with eye contact, undivided attention, and focused attention. Dialogue where two people share their experiences, thoughts, emotions, feelings, and desires without interrupting each other. I think of a typical person today. We are watching TV, or reading a book, or playing a video game, or texting. I have heard of people texting each other when they are down the hall from each other or even in the same room as each other! We live in a world of distraction, but it’s also a world that’s increasingly isolated. Quality time is a critical and counter cultural expression of love.

So, how do we practice quality time? We ask engaging questions, we avoid doing something else when we are listening to the other person. We listen sympathetically to understand their thoughts, feelings and desires. And, we practice togetherness. We spend time doing special things or everyday things together. Maybe your spouse, your child, your friend has said things like, “I would love to…” It could be a special vacation or going somewhere special.

What can you do this week to offer your full attention, your ministry of presence, to someone you love? Is it eating at a dinner table, taking a walk together, game night or craft time, doing the dishes together? It’s such a small thing, but so important.

What can you do this week to spend quality time with God? Being truly present to another person today means letting go of our constant preoccupations, immersing ourselves in the here and now, and giving ourselves wholeheartedly to whatever is at hand. It’s about becoming more aware, alert, awake to the fullness of the immediate moment. If we are with another person, it means engaging with him or her with all of our heart, our mind, our soul, and our strength. Such wholehearted attention requires patience, time, and disciplined effort. And it is one of the greatest gifts that we can give to those around us, especially our suffering neighbor.

Jesus practiced a ministry of presence and we are commanded to do the same. God’s love shines through and our love shines through when we sit with someone while they grieve, wait with them at the doctor’s office, take someone out for coffee who’s out of work or going through a family crisis.

What would happen to the emotional climate of a household, a workplace, a congregation, a neighborhood if we left behind the distractions and the isolation for being truly present to one another, to loving each other by spending quality time? They say time is money. Time is valuable, but not so much for this reason. Time is valuable because time is love.

Greenland Hills is a church that loves. And we, as followers of Jesus the Christ, are called to love, whether that is by words of affirmation, gifts, acts of service, physical touch or quality time. I want us all to imagine someone in our lives that we could share our love with today. How can you show that person love today? Through a kind word, through a gift expressing your love, by helping them clean out their garage, by a hug, or by spending time with them over coffee? We have the precious gift of life today. As we love ourselves and as we love others, may we experience joy through love.