

LIVING  
IT OUT



**DAILY  
BIBLE  
STUDY**



**CEDARCREEKCHURCH**

# Who, Is More Important than What

Monday, February 13, 2017

It's 1962, and you live in what once was the United States of America. Two decades ago, the Allies lost World War II, and thus the USA ceased to exist. Now, Germany and Japan have split the land of the United States in half, Germany taking the eastern half and Japan taking the western half. Remnants of the former free society are prevalent, but only as a part of the past.

This is the plot to the award-winning Amazon Prime television series, *The Man in the High Castle*. This show is an incredible exploration into the alternate universe described above. Each episode leaves you wanting to dive further into the story and exposes humanity's carnal nature.

I can't recommend the show enough.

A few weeks ago, I was at home with my daughter, and we had a few hours before my wife was going to be home. Ruby and I ate dinner together and then moved to the family room. I fell onto the couch and thought, "Finally! I can relax on the couch and watch my show." Then, I heard my little two-year old say,

*Daddy! Yeegos? Play yeegos?*

Sound like a foreign language?

She was asking me to play Legos with her. Typically, this involves us working together to build towers for her to eventually knock down. I really wanted to watch my show. The last episode I'd watched was so gripping and, of course, ended with a crazy cliffhanger. I didn't feel like I had the energy to play "yeegos," but after looking into her eyes, I knew that it would mean the world to her if I'd sit down and spend some quality time with her, building and knocking down yeegos. I put my phone down, and for the next thirty minutes, we played yeegos like it was the last time we'd ever get the chance.

Later that night, as Kaela and I put Ruby to bed, Kaela asked, "What did you and Daddy do today?" To which Ruby responded, "Play yeegos!" The happiness I felt in that moment is indescribable. Imagine if she'd said, "Daddy watched his television show while I just sat and played by myself" (in two-year-old language). That would've been devastating.

Quality time is hard to come by. We live in a fast-paced, always busy (or so we say) society. Our devices – phones, computers, television screens, etc. – seemingly demand our attention at all hours of the day. It is not rare, unfortunately, for a group of people to be in the same room but virtually unaware of each other because they are so focused on their devices. It's not simply electronics, either. It seems that all of us have problems with quality time. We are far too distracted.

This past weekend, Ben Snyder kicked off our new series, *The Space Between Us* – which is based on the book *Love Languages* by Gary Chapman – by discussing the first love language, quality time. One story from the Gospel of Luke illustrates how important quality time is.

In Luke 10, Jesus comes to the house of two sisters: Mary and Martha. Martha began preparing a big dinner for Jesus and the rest of the guests while Mary sat at Jesus' feet and listened to his teachings. Martha was frustrated with her sister, as she wasn't helping her with the task of preparing the meal, but instead was "just sitting" there. Jesus' response is striking. He says, "*My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her.*"

Jesus makes it clear that quality time with him is of the utmost importance. So often we think that we must be doing something – we have to keep busy – and while there are certainly times where we must be busy, we cannot forget to stop and spend time with the ones we love, especially Jesus.

Ben said that quality time is focused attention. It involves listening, limiting interruptions, being present, and having a shared discovery. When our time spent with those around us is spent distracted or unfocused, we aren't spending *quality* time, we are wasting *precious* time.

This week, we are going to discuss how to engage in quality time with those around us and especially with God. Imagine if we all approached our time with others the same way Mary approached her time with Jesus. I hope to remember this so I can make more *yeegos* moments. I'll remember those; but as good as *The Man in the High Castle* is, I won't be discussing that as a treasured memory in the years to come.

## **Luke 10:38-42**

<sup>38</sup> As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. <sup>39</sup> Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he taught. <sup>40</sup> But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me."

<sup>41</sup> But the Lord said to her, "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! <sup>42</sup> There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her."

What had Mary "discovered"?

What does it look like for you to spend quality time with those closest to you?

### **Try This:**

- Take Love Languages Assessment [here](#).
- Share your love language with your "inner circle," and ask about theirs.
- **Quality time:** Plan a shared experience that allows you to have focused attention on a relationship that matters to you.

### **Prayer:**

*Heavenly Father, thank you so much for the gift of time. Help me to not take it for granted. I know that it's so easy to be distracted when I'm with those closest to me, but I also know how important our time together is. Help me to be engaged when I'm with people, and help me to be engaged when I'm spending time with you. Amen.*

*This post was written by Andy Rectenwald, the Director of the LivingItOut Bible Study.*

# Living a Life of Invitation

Tuesday, February 14, 2017

Quality time with people is essential to our mission to reach people.

When people say, “Do you play golf?” I say, “I go out on the course with clubs.” I’m not sure that what I do on the course would necessarily qualify as “golf.” (My husband wants me to play, so I try.)

Several years ago, while working fulltime at CedarCreek, a friend asked me if I wanted to join her golf league. Working for a church doesn’t necessarily connect you with people who don’t know Christ, so I said, “yes.” It was a 45-minute drive for me every Wednesday morning, but I was hopeful that I would be able to share Christ with the women in the league. I prayed for the women I played with. I cultivated relationships. I partnered with my friend who invited the women to participate in her work at Vision Kitchen. I loved. I encouraged. I planted seeds that would invite people to be curious about Jesus. As far as I know, no one ever came to church or ever came to know Jesus. Was it worth the effort? I think so! These women knew they could come to me with their concerns, that I would pray with and for them. Some rough edges got smoothed out with extra listening and encouragement. Maybe some people are curious about Jesus now, and the next time someone invites them to church, they’ll check it out! I think that’s what God planned for me to do there: plant seeds.

When I was a new Christian, I thought that if I didn’t lay out the whole Gospel message and pray with the person to receive Christ, I hadn’t been successful. It was so stressful! (Wait! Was that about me?) Then someone taught me that salvation is the work of the Holy Spirit, as no one comes to Jesus unless drawn by the Spirit of God (John 6:44). That took me off the hook to “close the deal!” Although I still try to let people know that I love Jesus, and live my life to please him, I don’t have to turn every conversation into an evangelistic belt-notching exercise! Instead, I try to:

## ***Colossians 4:5-6***

*<sup>5</sup>Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity. <sup>6</sup>Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone.*

More than anything, I want to live a life of *invitation*. I don't want anything that I do or say to prevent me from sharing my faith with people I meet or hang out with. This intention helps me make better choices with my words, my attitudes, and my actions. I can't stand the thought of being hypocritical by saying one thing with my words that my actions don't confirm. I'm not always successful in that, or in golf. Prayer helps (but not with golf!)

In today's passage, the Apostle Paul asks the Colossian Christians to pray for them. He asks for opportunities to share the Gospel with others. Then, he instructs them to live wisely amongst those with whom they want to share their faith.

### ***Colossians 4:2-6***

*<sup>2</sup>Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart. <sup>3</sup>Pray for us, too, that God will give us many opportunities to speak about his mysterious plan concerning Christ. That is why I am here in chains. <sup>4</sup>Pray that I will proclaim this message as clearly as I should.*

*<sup>5</sup>Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity. <sup>6</sup>Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone.*

Do you find yourself spending most of your time with other Christians? Where could you look for opportunities to develop relationships with people who may not know Christ yet? In whom can you plant a seed? This can be as simple as listening and praying.

Do you pray and ask God for openings to share the Gospel with others? If that were to happen, would you know how? (*Just Walk Across the Room* by Bill Hybels is a great resource for suggestions about sharing the gospel.)

**Prayer:**

*Lord, you've called us to be salt and light in our world. Help me to look for ways I can bring light into my corner of the world. Give me the desire and the boldness to speak about how you've changed my life, and the courage to invite people into this wonderful life of loving and following you. Amen.*

# Give up Your Own Way

Wednesday, February 15, 2017

As a single person, I decided a couple of years ago to try the dating site *Christian Mingle*. I wrote "MUST LOVE JESUS" at the top of my page and checked all the tabs that said "looking for serious relationships only, regular church attendance, community involvement," etc. Imagine my surprise when most of the responses I got were from guys who considered themselves Christian, but only attended church on Christmas and Easter, and who were not looking to get serious. Was I unclear? Or is the definition of a Christian so broad that many people don't understand what it means to be a disciple of Christ?

Giving our lives to Christ means **all** our lives. It means the person that we used to be -- self-serving, prideful, dishonest -- that person is **dead** and **Christ now lives** through us. Unfortunately, that doesn't mean that those sinful qualities automatically vanish, but it does mean that we ARE a new creation and we ARE to live our lives as such.

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! (2 Corinthians 5:17)

But how?

We must allow Christ to live through us. We must trust that he can heal our hearts and, allow him the access to do so. It will not happen overnight, but it will happen if we spend time to replace old behaviors with new ones.

We cannot continue to live life the way we always have. That is what is meant by dying to Christ. It means submitting our whole life: all day, every day. This does not mean that we will get it right every time or be perfect, and he knows that!

Often, we look at following Jesus like we would look at attending school. Instead of giving him quality time, we give him parts of our lives. We spend five minutes of quiet time in the morning, pray before meals, and ask him to take the wheel in traffic (hopefully without expletives). Until we take him everywhere and make him part of everything we do, we cannot have the relationship that he wants us to have. The disciples lived with Jesus. They slept, ate, travelled, and worked with him every day. He taught them as their rabbi, yes, but most of the learning came through the everyday living. Jesus



didn't ask these guys to learn from him a couple times a week. They weren't attending a weekend seminar; they were doing life with him.

The passage for today comes directly after Jesus predicts his death and then rebukes Peter for telling him he can't die. The context here is crucial. After saying that he has to die, he tells his followers they have to follow him. If we follow him, we become part of the upside-down economy that says we must die so that we may live. We gain the world and lose our souls, or we die to self and gain a life so much richer, a life that leads to an eternity in heaven.

### **Matthew 16:24-26**

*<sup>24</sup>Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. <sup>25</sup>If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. <sup>26</sup>And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?<sup>[1]</sup> Is anything worth more than your soul?"*

What do you think is meant by the phrase "gain the whole world but lose your soul?"

The word "incorporate" stems from the Latin "to take into the body." What practical steps can you take to incorporate Jesus?

### **Prayer:**

*Father, you have called me out of darkness to follow you. I know that you're asking for my whole life. I know that I struggle turning everything over to you, and so I ask that you would help me with this. Help me to continually give my life to you. In Jesus' name, amen.*

This post was written by Kelda Strasbourg, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.

# Are You Missing Out?

Thursday, February 16, 2017

I once had a conversation with a young man while we were traveling by train from Yokosuka to Tokyo, Japan. Our conversation began with him asking me if I skateboarded. My reply was something uneventful like ... “not really.” He then began telling me all about skateboarding. He went into so much detail that I was beginning to think this guy was a professional.

He was describing the types of bearings you need, the different types of “trucks” (the hardware that attaches the wheels to the deck), the grit of the material on the board, and even the types of shoes that were best to use.

When we got to our destination, I finally asked him. “Are you a professional skateboarder?” to which he replied, “I’ve never skateboarded in my life.”

This story reminds me that Christians are a lot like this guy. Some of us act like we know a lot about the Bible because we hear what other people say, but we’ve never really read it ourselves.

We might know a few verses, a little bit of the lingo, but we’ve never experienced transformation.

We go to the LifeGroups, church on Sundays, and even listen to uplifting music on the radio, but we have never sat down and spent time listening to hear God’s gentle whisper through Scripture.

## **WE ARE MISSING OUT.**

Quality time with God through his Word and in prayer is a necessity for a Christian.

The Bible should not just be another book to us. It should be **“THE BOOK.”** A popular acronym for BIBLE is ***Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth***.

The author of Hebrews tells us that scripture is “... living and active ... exposing our innermost thoughts and desires” (Hebrews 4:12-13). In other words, it is able to differentiate between our thoughts and our intentions, something we can’t do ourselves.

It reveals our motives and shows us the truth. The things that we believe are undistinguishable, like the soul and the spirit, become distinguishable.

There are four things that happen when we spend quality time with God by reading his Word:

- 1. We recognize our need for him.**
- 2. We gain knowledge and conviction.**
- 3. We experience transformation.**
- 4. We become more like him.**

*1 Peter 2:2 says, "Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment ..."*

The other way that we can spend quality time with God is in prayer.

Prayer is essentially our way of speaking to God. It doesn't have to be at a table with hands folded and head down. It can be on a morning commute, standing in line at the grocery store, or on an afternoon jog.

It is about making quality time with God a priority. Not because we have to, but because we want to; because it changes our lives.

### ***Hebrews 4:12-13***

*<sup>12</sup>For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. <sup>13</sup>Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable.*

**Take a moment right now to speak to God. Tell him everything that is going on in your life -Your fears, worries, doubts and joys.**

**Start spending time in God's Word daily.**

- Read a Scripture
- Think about it
- Listen to what God is telling you
- Pray

**Prayer:**

*Lord, reveal anything in me that is not of you. Make the desire to spend time with you in prayer and in Scripture more prevalent in my life. Remind me that one day with you is better than a thousand elsewhere.*

# Prayer is the Key to Transformation

Friday, February 17, 2017

Have you ever pulled an “all-nighter?” College, and even high school, students often stay awake all night cramming for a test or working on a project they have been procrastinating about. Jesus pulled several all-nighters, but his objective was entirely different. Luke 6:12 says Jesus “prayed to God all night.” Later, in Luke 22, Jesus again spent much of the night in prayer as he prepared for the inevitability of his coming death.

Numerous Scriptures instruct us to devote ourselves to prayer (Colossians 4), to present our requests to God (Philippians 4), and to pray what Jesus taught (Matthew 6). Prayer is our primary source of communication with God. For some people, it may just feel like we’re talking to the ceiling, as it did for me when I was a new Christian. Even when I didn’t feel anything, I kept talking to God until it became more like a conversation. I don’t mean that God is always responding right away or even audibly speaking back to me, but in the sense that I am earnestly praying, offering my requests to God, and I know that he is listening. We should pray, according to John Piper, because God “loves to be asked for things.” As he points out, “The prayer of the upright is his delight” (Proverbs 15:8).

God is not a magical genie, granting all of our wishes just as we please. He is the all-knowing Creator who knows exactly what we need, when we need it. While God does want us to ask for things, Piper makes a clarification, “By ‘things’ I don’t mean objects or stuff. I mean, generally, whatever your heart desires or needs. And, of course, what your heart needs most is God – to know him and trust him and love him and obey him. I know that we should come to God with more than asking. We should come confessing sins and giving thanks and praise. In a broad sense, prayer includes all that. But, speaking precisely, prayer is requesting.”

Through prayer, we have an intimate connection to God. That is why Jesus spent entire days and nights in prayer. This may seem impossible for us, but there are specific ways we can connect with God through prayer. Jesus warned early believers about the Pharisees who made long, loud prayers in public places so others could hear them. However, we should choose a dedicated, private place and a consistent time to come to God in prayer. “Devote yourself to prayer. Be alert in it, and do whatever you have to do to see that you meet God in a focused way to hear from him in his Word and to offer up your desires to him in prayer,” Piper said.

If you don't know how to begin, consider the ACTS model of prayer. Begin by telling God all the ways you **A**dore him and appreciate him. Next, **C**onfess your sins and ask God's forgiveness. **T**hank God for anything and everything. Finally, present your requests to God, known as **S**upplication. Make this a daily habit, and your conversations will become livelier, your life will have more direction, and your soul will be satisfied.

Why do you think so many Christians struggle with prayer?

What can you do differently to improve your prayer life?

**Prayer:**

*Praise be to you, God, for your love is everlasting. I confess that I have sinned and fallen short of your glory, but I know I am justified freely by your grace. Thank you for never leaving me and for always providing, even in my time of doubt. I ask that you continue to make yourself known in my life, and in the lives of others. Amen.*

This post was written by Ryan Cook, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.