

**Trash Your To Do List, Matthew 22:35-40**

*Soul Care, Week 6 - Relationships: People Over Tasks*

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Linda Marr

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. The second is like it, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” All the law and Prophets hang on these two commandments.” Matthew 22:35-40.

OK. I have a LOT of things to do today.

Kids are all home -- so oh great. So rare we have all three home together. Geez. So rare.. Must make EVERYTHING perfect. Where to start?

*What, Caroline? Geez, I'd love to grab breakfast but I've got all these THINGSs To do... maybe tomorrow? Must run to the grocery store to buy all the things to make all their favorite foods. Dinner -- what should we have? One doesn't eat meat. One hates fish. Healthy, but not too healthy or Warren won't want it...\*

*Bells--Oh geez the puppy -- Koda must need to go out. Oh thanks Kels -- you'll walk him? Come with you -- No; shoot can't join you; maybe later; got to get some of these things done.*

OK - check FB about this week's class -- anyone like my post; anyone see my post?

*Just a minute guys -- be right there -- def want to hear all about your trip, just have to finish working on a few things like my sermon message on ...*

**BUSTED**

-- Prioritizing People over Tasks....

Totally busted. Anyone else? So busy doing all the THINGS for all the people we have no time FOR the PEOPLE. Our Soul craves relationships. God made us for community. Jesus felt so strongly about this he prioritized people right next to God. When the Pharisees asked “Which is the greatest commandment in the law”, Jesus replied “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” All the Law and Prophets hang on these two commandments.” Matthew 22:35-40. Love God; love each other. Simple. Why do we let so many **things** get in the way?

Jesus didn't. He backed up those words with actions -- he didn't just teach disciples; he ate with them, traveled with them, lived with them -- he invested time with them. Jesus certainly knew all about time and busy. The world he was born into was a MESS. So many people needed saving. He had many, many things to do. And he knew his time on this earth; his time with us was

limited. He knew his agenda. And he still made time for others.... Time... Our arch enemy. So busy. No time.

So how do we prioritize people -- even WITH our busy lives.

1. Start with filling our cup. Follow the model of Jesus -- what Pastor Doug spoke about a few weeks ago in our Soul Care Message on Busyness. Jesus spent time every day, often early in the morning, with his father. "Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray." Mark 1:35.

To get our priorities straight we need to prioritize spending time with our heavenly father. This is not yet another thing to add to our To Do List - another task. This is a gift -- the God of the Universe WANTS to spend time with us. To fill our hearts. To help us see what is important. To order our lives. To give us his peace. Best way to set a strong foundation for Soul Care is to let God fill you so you can overflow with His peace and joy to others.

2. We also need to be intentional with People over Tasks.

To Do Lists. Who else has them? I've got every iteration -- on my phone, Post Its, paper calendar. My To Do Lists have To Do Lists. So often when I look at my calendar and think "Wow. I've got a WIDE OPEN day. I am going to check SO MANY things off my To Do List today. I think I will use this fun EAGLES GREEN pen; this is so awesome.

Honestly, I feel like whenever I say this; God is up there chuckling. He and St. Peter are having a good old laugh. And then God gently says, "Listen." and puts on my heart a person or a situation that needs my time and attention. Now. And when I'm listening, so I feel that nudge; I know to set aside my lists and things and spend time with whoever God is directing me towards. And guess what -- my own heart is filled with peace and joy as I allow God to work through me. When you spend quiet time letting God fill you, ask him who he wants you to reach out to for Him. He will place people on your heart and in your path if you listen and ask for eyes to see. And just to clarify, I'm not saying we shouldn't have plans and organization and boundaries. All are good and have a place in our lives. Our lives just should not solely focus on our calendars; our schedules, what we accomplish. As we all well know, NONE of us nor our loved ones are guaranteed an earthly tomorrow. What we are pretty much guaranteed is that our To Do List will still be there tomorrow...

Let's look for a minute at Jesus. In his 33 years on this earth, Jesus didn't "accomplish much" according to our world; He didn't check big projects off his To Do List. He built

no fabulous earthly temple in which to worship his father. He created no great mega church with rocking music programs. Celebrated no military victories -- which was the one thing the Jewish people were really looking for.

What **did** he do?

He spent quality intentional time with people

- His 12 disciples who would carry his message to the ends of the earth
- Friends -- Mary, Martha, Lazarus become some of his strongest supporters
- Samaritan Woman at the well who after spending unheard of time talking with Jesus, testified to her entire village and brought them to meet the Messiah
- Zacchaeus -- dishonest tax collector who had been shunned by the religious community for years, yet immediately turned from his life of corruption because Jesus CARED
- Even after he rose from the dead, he took time, three times to be exact, to reassure Peter, who had rejected him three times in Jesus' last hours, of his place in God's kingdom.

Jesus changed the world by investing in PEOPLE.

3. Spend time with God, be intentional with our time with others -- how else do we prioritize people? Something we know for sure is that life changes and always will. Embrace where God has you right now - with the people God has placed around you - the circumstances God has you in, right now.

This is where I am right now. No littles -- my kids are all grown and off into the world; Caroline just started her SENIOR year of college. What I do have is a PUPPY and a MESS. My house is not my own; it is set up so my puppy can be "successful" at learning to behave -- no lie; this is the newest term in puppy training -- set them up for success! So hard for me to surrender that mess. Yet right now it's more important (for my future sanity!) to give Koda my time and attention than to make my house perfect. Time will pass -- puppy will become a dog... And I will regain some semblance of order in the house. In the meantime, I'll appreciate the puppy snuggles in the morning and try to let go of the mess during the day.

How about you? Any of you in the weeds with littles, finding it nearly impossible to get anything done? Maybe your job has changed and you're worrying, trying to figure out just what your next move should be. Or maybe you're feeling isolated -- tired of having to be "socially distant." Or heading back to a new school -- with classmates and teachers you have never met in person.

Remember -- all of this is a moment in time. It will change. Try to embrace where God has you right now, with the people God has placed around you right now. We miss opportunities with the people right where we are when we are constantly focusing on things we need to get done, “important stuff,” and worrying about what’s next.

Jesus, for sure, had IMPORTANT things to do. Talk about Kingdom work. And then, one day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could touch and bless them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him. Didn't they know Jesus was an important man, with many things to do? “When Jesus saw what was happening, he was angry with his disciples. He said to them, Let the children come to me. Don’t stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children. And he placed his hands on their heads and blessed them before he left.” Matthew 19:14-15. He validated those parents and their love for their children by spending time with them. And he used it as a teaching moment about priorities for his disciples.

So what are some ways we can prioritize; spend time with people, right where God has us, even with our busy lives? A few weeks back Pastor Doug and Lisa spoke about the importance of keeping our bodies/our temple healthy -- how about making a date to walk and talk with a friend who God’s put on your heart. And - bonus - making a commitment with a buddy increases the likelihood that you will get out there and actually do it!

Make time count! My friend used the morning drive to school to create intentional time with her girls, praying over their day with them. It soon became a habit the girls looked forward to. And a great way to set their day. You may be limited in where you can go right now, but make time to reach out to the people in your life; check in; say hi; share what’s on your heart and make time to listen to what’s on theirs. Instead of gaming online with friends, make time to actually meet up with friends -- head to the ballfields, go for a bike ride, grab some ice cream. Talk in person instead of solely online!

Do you know we have an awesome team of people right here at Woodside with the sole purpose of caring for the church body -- Woodside’s Deacons are truly God’s hands and feet. During the pandemic they’ve been challenged with how to support others when we often can't BE with others. Check out this beautiful creative way they were able to show love and care to one of our beloved members who is stuck at home because she is immunocompromised. They gathered in her parking lot, called Peggy and told her to look out her window! That’s LOVE in action!

How about asking a friend to join you for Bible Study? Our church wide series this fall is GPS -- - how God can use your Gifts, Passion and Story to reach others for him. This is a GREAT series to do with a group; invite a neighbor who is searching for “the next thing” to come to your growth group. GPS is also an easy study to do one-on-one with a friend. All the materials are provided for you. There’s a weekly Study Video with Discussion Questions. Invite a friend or 2 -

- U+2 -- and spend time doing it together. As this past year has shown us, your friend doesn't even have to be local, you could do the study via Zoom. You can find a list of Growth Groups at the Welcome Center or check the "Help me find a Growth Group" box on the Connection Card and our awesome Discipleship Director Meg Smith will reach out to you.

4. Lastly, to truly prioritize people, we need to be real.

Mask wearing -- anyone kinda like the anonymity of mask wearing? Like when you can't remember the last time you showered and you throw on your mask so you can dash into the grocery store without being recognized? We may need to wear masks to protect ourselves and others, but we need to drop our figurative masks to have real relationships. Pretending to be OK when you're really not; posting only good stuff on social media when your life is not. Keeping busy busy busy, so you don't have time to feel empty empty empty. These things exhaust us; do not fulfill our souls, and they put up a barrier that can make it hard for others to relate to us and us to others.

When we drop those masks, we not only free ourselves, we free others to be real as well. A few years ago I had a tough situation with one of my kids. I was really upset. I hadn't told anyone as I was embarrassed. Sitting in my Friday morning GG, it was KILLING me to smile and make chit chat. But I took a deep breath, I knew this was a safe place, and shared what had happened. I immediately felt unburdened and received the blessing of my sisters in Christ praying for me and my child. At the end of group, one of the girls came over and thanked me for being honest. She said she felt so much lighter as it often seemed like everyone else had absolutely perfect kids. We had a good laugh over that one, but it's easy to feel that way when we only share the good stuff; the highlights. And she went on to share a situation her family was struggling with and I was able to then offer her support and love.

*"Sometimes it's through our cracks and our broken places God's light shines through the brightest."* Holly Gerth, "You're Going to Be Okay."

God loves us. He loves people. He created us in his image to be love to others. He loved us so much he sent Jesus to be with us -- to show us how to live and love. Jesus changed the world by investing in people. And he still does. Jesus is active in our world by investing in you. Put aside your To Dos for a moment, spend time with the one who loves you most; allow him to love through you.

"Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think." Ephesians 3: 20

Will you let him?

