

Talk About It

Small Group Discussion Guide

5 Words to Change Your Life

November 9-12, 2023

Start Talking

Are you a cat person, a dog person, a different kind of pet person, or none of the above? Have you always been that way or changed as an adult?

Main Idea

We are in Week 2 of our teaching series, "5 Words to Change Your Life". This week, we will look at PRESENCE! What does it mean to truly be present with someone? The timing of this message can change us and challenge us as we approach the busyness of the holiday season. Culture sometimes implies that slow is bad and fast is good, that it's normal to go fast and live a hurried, busy life. But when you only live life going fast, it is hard to stop and just spend time with the people closest to you. Work is important and even a gift from God. The call to be present is not about creating an absence of work but being more mindful to recognize that there are times for work and times for setting it aside to be truly present, to slow down, appreciate, and enjoy. E

Pastor Jackson said, "Even a good thing might not be the right thing if it is causing us to miss out on being present in the moment." Jesus gave us several examples when he encountered the woman with the issue of bleeding, Zacchaeus, and Mary & Martha. He understood that interruptions to his day were not so much problems that needed to be solved but people who needed to be loved. So, let's be "present" together and listen for what God wants to say to us today!

Personalize It

1. How do the accounts of the woman with the issue of bleeding, Zacchaeus, and Mary & Martha demonstrate the idea of "presence"?
2. Holocaust survivor and author Corrie Ten Boom said, "If the devil cannot make us bad, he will make us busy." Do you agree? How might busyness inhibit living the spiritually healthy, fruit-bearing life we were meant for?
3. What does a "patient" love look like in your relationship with others? What does it look like in God's relationship with you? What is a relationship in your life where you could start practicing it?
4. How often has someone needed you, and it felt more like an interruption than an opportunity to love? Do you experience this more with family/kids, coworkers, neighbors, and the public?
5. Ask more questions. Put down screens. Intentionally practice slowing. Prioritize relationships. Which of these 4 tips do you find the most challenging? Do you want that to change about you? What can you start or stop doing to bring about that change this week?

Let's Do It! Commit to a step and live it out this week!

1. Take a look at your schedule over the last 2 weeks. Does it indicate a hurried pace? Identify 2-3 times that you could have demonstrated "presence" a little more and decide to apply those things in the upcoming weeks.
2. Be ready for an "opportunity to love" this week that comes disguised as an interruption. Maybe you could get in the long line at the grocery store and begin a conversation or ask the checkout clerk how their day is going and offer some encouragement rather than just transact business. Look for it and seize the opportunity to flip the script from interruption to opportunity!
3. Make the decision: will you wallow in self-pity for past failures in being "present" in the lives of friends and loved ones, or will you commit to slow down and be present with them this Christmas season and going forward? The past is the past. The future is a decision.
4. Have you downloaded the Cypress app to your phone yet? Take a moment to do so and browse its contents. It includes additional teaching notes, announcements, opportunities to serve and connect with others, and so much more!

Let's Pray

Father, thank You for the example that Jesus demonstrated in being truly present in the moment with those most dear. We confess that we often live hurried lives to get where we are going, packing our schedules to keep us "doing," and we let the busyness distract us from the moments and the people that truly matter. Help us realize that while work is good and a gift from You, so are the times when we can just be still with You and truly be there with others. Go with us this week. Speak to our spirits so that we see interruptions as opportunities to love, whether a family member who wants our attention or a stranger in the checkout line who You put there for us to encourage. Thank You for always being the God who is there for us, every time, without fail. We love you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Scriptures

Ecclesiastes 3:1-3 (NLT)

For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to harvest. A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to build up.

1 Corinthians 13:4 (NLT)

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud

Luke 8:40-48 (NLT)

On the other side of the lake the crowds welcomed Jesus, because they had been waiting for him. Then a man named Jairus, a leader of the local synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come home with him. His only daughter, who was about twelve years old, was dying. As Jesus went with him, he was surrounded by the crowds. A woman in the crowd had suffered for twelve years with constant bleeding, and she could find no cure. Coming up behind Jesus, she touched the fringe of his robe. Immediately, the bleeding stopped. "Who touched me?" Jesus asked. Everyone denied it, and Peter said, "Master, this whole crowd is pressing up against you." But Jesus said, "Someone deliberately touched me, for I felt healing power go out from me." When the woman realized that she could not stay hidden, she began to tremble and fell to her knees in front of him. The whole crowd heard her explain why she had touched him and that she had been immediately healed. "Daughter," he said to her, "your faith has made you well. Go in peace."

Luke 19:1-6 (NLT)

Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way. When Jesus came by, he looked up at

Zacchaeus and called him by name. "Zacchaeus!" he said. "Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today." Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy.

Psalm 46:10 (NIV)

He says, "Be still, and know that I am God"

Luke 10:38-42 (NLT)

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. Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he taught. 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." But the Lord said to her, "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.