

# The Gift of Presence

## Be Present.

### Introduction

I've titled this sermon, the *GIFT* of presence, because for most of us, it truly is a gift to be with another person who takes the time to drop their hurried agenda, to focus on you-the person in front of them, to look you in the eye, to listen, and to engage.

You might also call this message ***the anti multi-tasking message***. Research now shows that multi-tasking is harmful and can lead to memory problems, decreased productivity, chronic stress, relationship problems, etc. (See Psychology Today [article](#))

Our goal is to be present to God, to ourselves, and to the people around us.

Nobody, and I mean nobody, wants to feel like they are a project, a checkbox on the to-do list of your day, no more important to you than an Instagram notification that just popped up on your cell phone screen.

Can you think of a person who has given you that gift lately? Think for a minute. How did that interaction make you feel?

### Embracing Everyday Interactions

Relax. Accept that you are on a lifelong journey of spiritual formation, and the person you are with is as well. So, learn to be accepting and present with yourself, with the person in front of you, and with God.

### Biblical Text Options

#### **Luke 10:38-42** –

Martha most likely the older and more respected sister. Perhaps she found her purpose, her identity, in fulfilling her duties as a manager of a home, and hostess? Perhaps she, like many of us able to accomplish a lot, received accolades from her ability to “multi-task”.. But as always, Jesus saw more in, and for, Martha. He cut to what was most important for Martha, and that is to be present to God. “Only one thing is needed.” Settle down. Things don't have to be perfect Martha. Just be. With me. That is most impt. Human ability to



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Biblical Text Options (cont.)

multi-task is a myth: <http://time.com/4737286/multitasking-mental-health-stress-texting-depression/>

### **Matthew 28:16-20 –**

I think of Jesus before he went to heaven, about to give the “great commission”, which would set in motion the most imp’t mission in the history of the world. Have you ever really thought about v. 17? *“When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.”* Jesus didn’t expect perfection then, and he doesn’t now. Their being in process didn’t seem to bother Jesus. In fact, it was when Peter thought he had it all together, that Jesus had to set him straight. Can we all just relax a little bit? Be humble. Accept ourselves and the place we are at, and accept others. When we let down our guards, our pre-conceived ideas about what each interaction, each relationship, should look like, I think there will be much more awareness of what God wants to do, and an opening for his presence to come in.

### **Genesis 16 –**

Powerful story.. Many scholars suspect that the angel of the Lord was actually Jesus. I assume that the Angel of the Lord knew what was up. And yet, he settled in to ask Hagar about her experience. Where have you been, and where are you going. Tell me about your past, and about your future, as we sit together NOW. He was the God who saw her. And who was with her, in the moment, in the dysfunction and pain of her life.

## Application

How do we grow in being present to the life God has given us, and the people in our lives? The book offers several suggestions.

- Stop multi-tasking and listen
- Be yourself in conversations. Stop trying to impress or dominate.
- Listen to God while you talk to people. Invite him into your interactions.
- Practice humility in your conversations
- Let go of your agenda and strategy and just go with it.

Story or example from leader/preacher about presence – in human relationship or with God.

\*\*Consider introducing practice of Daily Examen



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### Application (cont.)

- "Most of us learn to discern God's presence by looking in the rearview mirror" – David Benner, The Gift of Being Yourself
- <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen#reflections>
- <https://www.onfaith.co/onfaith/2007/08/13/finding-god-on-the-metro/763>

When we are present to god, we are more able to know his heart for us...his love, his guidance, and more able to discern his heart for others...and somehow, though imperfectly, reflect that through our words and actions.

### Closing

As you leave today ask these questions: What is one practical step I can take toward being more present to God, and the people around me?

