

**Have you ever seen someone perform as a "plate spinner"?** If you have never seen it, picture something like this...The plate spinner would have a number of long, thin wooden rods sticking straight up, all in a row. Starting at one end of the row, he would put a plate on top of the wooden rod and start spinning it until it was going fast enough to not fall off of the rod. Then he would move on to the next rod and get another plate spinning. He would continue this down the entire row of wooden rods.

**Soon, the plates he began spinning earlier would slow down, start to wobble and almost fall off the wooden rod.** The plate spinner would have to stop what he was doing and go back and very quickly get that plate spinning again. Eventually there would be so many spinning plates that the plate spinner would be frantically running from rod to rod trying to keep them all going. Eventually, he would not be able to keep up with them all, and plates would start to fall and break.

**Too often, we find ourselves living life like the man moving from one plate to the next keeping everything spinning and growing more exhausted and stressed out with each additional plate.** There's the family, one's work, church meetings, soccer games and out-of-town business trips...the list goes on and on. Christmas certainly adds plates to one's life, to the point where one actually waits for it to be over and done with.

In the book, **The Purpose Driven Life**, Rick Warren shares the following:

"Life is all about love. Because God is love, the most important lesson He wants you to learn on earth is how to love. It is in loving that we are most like Him, so love is the foundation of every command He has given us: "The whole Law can be summed up in this one command: 'Love others as you love yourself.'" (The Purpose Driven Life, Rick Warren, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002, p. 123)

And that is exactly what we hope to do in this season of Advent/Christmas.

**Gary Chapman, author of the best-selling book series The Five Love Languages,** reminds us that love is demonstrated in five primary languages: 1) time; 2) affirmation; 3) acts of service; 4) physical touch; 5) gifts. During this season of Advent and Christmas we will examine how the Savior personified all of these primary love languages, and as we do, it is my prayer that we grow in love for God and for one another. Paul's prayer becomes ours:

*"...I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love...that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."*  
(Eph. 3:18-19).

**It is important to remember that Chapman says that everyone speaks a primary love language.** This love language must be spoken or the person doesn't feel loved. He says everyone has a "love tank" within them that needs to be filled with love. If he does not receive this love, his "love tank" stays empty, and he feels unloved. For example, he claims that many married couples would stay together and not divorce if each one only knew and spoke the other's love language. Once again, these love languages are as follows:  
1) time; 2) affirmation; 3) acts of service; 4) physical touch; and 5) gifts.

**Every adult and high school youth will receive a profile test as you leave church this morning.** I am asking that you do the profile sometime this week to determine your primary love language. Some of you might have high scores in two different areas in which case you might have more than one primary love language; you might be bi-lingual!

**We can easily discover the primary love language of our child by asking such questions as, “How does he most often express love to others?”** If he is always giving gifts, gift giving might be his primary love language. If he’s always patting someone on the back, shaking hands or hugging, his love language may be physical touch.

**Another way of determining your child’s love language is to ask, “What does the child most often complain about?”** If he’s always complaining that his friend is too busy for him, his primary love language might be quality time. Does she love to work in the kitchen along with her mom? Her love language might be acts of service. It is important to remember that no one love language is better than another. It is just that there are different ways of saying “I love you” to another.

**The love language we will take a closer look at this morning is quality time.** The person whose primary love language is quality time feels most loved when someone spends time with him. It is giving someone your undivided attention. Instead of looking at Monday night football, you sit in front of your wife and look at each other and talk to one another. It’s taking your son fishing for an entire day and not looking at your wristwatch even once. It’s reading the comics with your grandparents. It’s remembering that time is life, and if you give someone time, you are giving life.

**One of the major spiritual myths promoted today is that the future is sequentially predictable.** Pre and post-millennialists speak of so many years of tribulation and a colorful rapture of believers. Televangelists give exact time frames of when and how things will happen when Christ comes a second time. However, Jesus makes it clear; “Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come” (Mk. 13:33). Jesus reminds His audience that it could happen during any of the four watches used by the Romans to determine time: in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn (Mk. 13:35).

*(Add any additional exegetical notes at this point.)*

**The message is clear. Use your time wisely.** Be prepared at all times for Christ’s return, because, though you don’t know when, you can be assured He is coming again. St. Paul says, “Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15-16).

**We are beginning the season of Advent. It is a time of preparation...**a season of preparing for His second coming as well as preparing for a celebration of His first coming. We prepare for both by spending quality time with Him this season. What Jesus says is that the way to be ready is to be doing His business, doing what He wants us to do. Advent is a time when we must examine what we are doing and whether or not it is the Lord’s business, whether or not we are doing God’s work! John writes that those who are on the side of God (doing His work), listen to Him (Jn. 18:37). Do your actions indicate that you’re on His side?

Are you listening to Him? Are you so wrapped up in the things of the world that you have forgotten Him? Will we get so wrapped up in the wrong things of Christmas that we will be unable to sing “Joy to the World” and mean it?

**There is little question that the primary love language for some of the Old and New Testament saints was quality time.** The psalmist could not spend enough time with God; in fact, when he was away from the house of the Lord, he fell into deep depression.

*“As the deer pants for You, O God, My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night...My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember You...Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God” (Ps. 42:1-3, 6, 11).*

Without quality time, he felt a distance between God and himself.

**Jesus Himself asked of His parents, “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?”** (Lk. 2:49). Whenever Jesus was challenged, He spent time with His heavenly Father. When choosing His disciples, He spent time in prayer. When seeking to do God’s will before His crucifixion, He spent hours in meditation with Him.

**Christmas is a time of busyness.** We get so caught up in the activities of the season that we forget to spend time with God and quality time with one another! We hurry from one activity to another and end up the season harried and worn out.

**Christmas love is forgiveness for the many times we have allowed other things in our lives to replace the important things.** We confess that too often we have failed to use our time wisely for Godly matters, and we bathe in the forgiveness that comes to us through Jesus, the Christmas Messiah. With forgiveness comes restoration—restoration and empowerment through Word and Sacrament to be more Christ-like in our love.

**Let us resolve with His Spirit working within us that this Advent/Christmas season we spend quality time with God and those we love the most.**

Spend time in worship. Take time to do daily devotionals. Attend the special Advent services.

**Dr. Chapman speaks of time as life.** When you give time, you give life to another person.

**Remember to schedule special time with loved ones who are often forgotten in convalescent or retirement homes.** Make it more than a “hi” and “goodbye, have to run.” Make the person think you’ve forgotten all about time.

Some time this week, sit down with your kids and share what the real meaning of this season is all about—Jesus!

Spend time playing games with your family.

Ask your wife if she'd just like to go window shopping. Hold her hand and make her think she's the most important person in the world.

**Later, after the kids have gone to bed, sit next to your spouse,** turn off the television, and just talk...look her in the eyes...give your undivided attention to her...listen to her feelings...observe her body language...and don't interrupt.

**Spend time putting the Christmas tree up and wrapping presents.** At the Christmas party, spend time affirming your associates. At church, spot the one person who seems most lonely, and go out of your way to spend some time with that person. As you think about your family, which family members have quality time as their primary love language? This Advent season fill their love tanks with love by giving them time. Share Christmas love by sharing some of your time, and thus, your life.

**Share Christmas love by sharing time. Amen.**