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Love is Spelled T-I-M-E

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Love is Spelled T-I-M-E

BY JASMINE FRASER

Tell them to your children over and over again . . . whether you're at home or walking along the road, or going to bed at night, or getting up in the morning (Deuteronomy 6:7 CEV).

Not long ago I attended a funeral and, as I watched the subdued faces and listened to the tributes given in honor of the one now lying breathless, I thought: “What fitting words to describe the life of one who epitomized the true essence of faithfulness!” When the time came for the children of the deceased to speak of their father, one message was recurrent in all they said: “Dad loved us with his time.”

Many parents today strive to find ways to love their children. As an expression of love, some parents lavish their children with gifts — toys, clothes, electronic gadgets — you name it, and parents get it for their children.

Some parents go to great lengths to find the ideal schools, programs or activities in which to enroll their children. For Christian parents, it's making sure their children are a part of the activities within the local church that are relevant for their development.

Yet, in spite of all the efforts that parents make to give their children the best materially, academically or through extracurricular activities, nothing measures up to the benefits of direct parent-child quality time.

Research proposes that nothing contributes better to a child's development and well-being than time spent with parents. Added studies indicate that, at the foundation of various parenting styles, is the need for intentional parent-child relational engagement. In ongoing dialogues, parents are urged to consider the importance of parent-child quality time. “Your children need to spend meaningful time with you. They need to see who you are and how you live



your life,” says pediatrician Harley Rotbart. Parents are charged with the duty of being the “first teacher” to their children, a responsibility that requires quality time.

Yet, with the demands of life, many parents may wonder how to find that quality time. A key to spending quality time with children is to be present in the mo-

ment. That is, pay attention! Look at how your children are changing daily. Listen (without interrupting) to what they are saying (or not saying)!

Parents also may revisit the ritual of family narratives by sharing stories of faith embedded in their family history. Telling and retelling family stories is in keeping with instructions given by God to parents. “Repeat [the commands I give you] again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up” (Deuteronomy 6:7 NLT).

Children will remember the times spent making family memories long after material things wane.

Jasmine Fraser is a doctoral candidate in Religious Education at Andrews University. Her area of emphasis is in Family Life Education.