

# CHRISTIAN *School* COMMENT

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## PRECIOUS ONE

The beginning of a new year is a good time to stop. That idea may sound strange as you look at a long list of resolutions—things you're going to *start* doing. But stopping in the Lord's presence enables us to fulfill our true calling. I hope you'll enjoy these words from Jay Ferguson, headmaster of Grace Community School (Tyler, Texas).

A friend shared a gift with me the other day, and I'd like to share it with you.

I received this gift in the context of considering the hurry in my life. When you're a busy parent whose to-do list always seems longer than the hours of the day, life is about hurrying: making your to-do list, picking up and dropping off, checking things off as you rush through your day. It seems as though we're all busy. If you ask someone how they are, they'll invariably reply "busy," won't they? So will you. And you'll mean it.

Checking off our to-do lists gives us a sense of accomplishment, a feeling of control. Hurry can also create stress and consternation, especially when other people interfere with our ability to get things done. When someone pokes his head into our office or our hectic life with a "got a minute?" it's an often-unwanted investment of time, energy, and presence—it's an expectation.

Society places its own expectations on us as well. If you're a mom, you must have it all together, have your kids in the right activities, and look fabulous doing it; if you're a dad, society says be strong, successful, and in control. Before we know it, fulfilling these roles, checking our boxes, and being available all become our identity: the way we measure our value, our worth in our work, our family, and to God. That's when it all becomes crushing.

Which is why I so appreciated my friend's gift the other day. He asked me to contemplate Jesus, to let my imagination about Him run. In Mark 5 and Luke 5, as in other places, crowds are pressing in on Jesus. They all want something from Him. They all expect Him to be something: great military leader, healer, teacher, king, or Messiah. They all want something from Him. And they want it right now. Can you imagine how overwhelming that feels? Sure, you can.

But Jesus had a very specific mission, one of which He was all too aware. He knew He wasn't going to meet most of their expectations. In fact, He was ultimately crucified, in part, for not meeting them. The crushing expectations of the crowd, the knowledge that He would fail to meet them, and that this would hasten His death had to create tremendous stress for Jesus. Wouldn't it for anybody? He was God, but He was also fully human.

So, Scripture says, He retreated to the wilderness. Often. He walked away from these serious expectations. As my friend invited

me to do, let your imagination take you into this sanctified relationship with God. If Jesus was human, in these times alone with His Father, did He vent His frustrations? The exhaustion of feeling others press on His soul, knowing that He could not meet their incessant needs, feeling overwhelmed, yet fighting to resist the temptation to place His identity in being needed and wanted? You're familiar with that feeling, too, aren't you?

In that crying out, I'll bet the Father responded not with reproof or criticism, but with compassion, and love, and gladness. I wonder if God then said to Jesus, as He would to us: "Thank You, My Son, for casting those burdens on Me. And, may I remind You of who You really are? Not who everyone calls You to be, who they want You to be, but of Your ultimate reality? Do You remember that day I baptized You, before You did anything for this world? What did I say? Do You remember? 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' You are My beloved. You are My Precious One."

Do you remember?

Was that what re-grounded Jesus and gave Him the strength to go on, to return to others and their demands with a clear sense of His identity? I'm sure it was a gift for Him, because it certainly is for me: to keep going back to the wellspring, to my Father's arms, to be reminded that I'm His precious one. Not because of what I accomplish or whose expectations I meet, but simply because, through Christ, that's who He's declared me to be. —Jay

