

Parents in pandemonium as summer comes to end

Dan Nelson - pastor

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It's that time of year where many of us are experiencing the "end of summer madness." You know what I am talking about. This is when one is surrounded by a plethora of summer projects and unfinished tasks that need to be completed, meanwhile, the new fall schedule demands adherence. School and sports season has officially begun, along with all of the relentless requirements that go with it. Yet, many cannot walk through the house or work place without being bombarded with stuff that needs to be cleaned, maintained, sorted, repaired or organized. It seems that everything and everyone commands your attention. Layer on a couple of weeks of sweltering heat that keep folks from going anywhere they don't absolutely have to, most won't even go into their garage right now, and you have the potential for pandemonium. You can usually diagnose this communal confusion in the pathetic response that parents and students share when the threat of one more thing is to be added on. To say that "their plates are full" is an understatement; things are in perilous danger of falling off. People are on the verge of being "stressed out"; some crossed that bridge two weeks ago. Jesus help!

This is the part where the hero of the story enters the scene. This one doesn't use the theatrics of the usual brand nor the skill sets that allow entrance into the secret society of super heroes. Providing peace that surpasses all human understanding is a unique ability limited to the "Prince of Peace" himself. Interesting that there is so much controversy and argument over the issues of peace and its ultimate source. Mention the word peace and almost everyone is in affirmation; say the name Jesus and many don't want peace enough to have to be in allegiance to him. But why?

His message is of love and acceptance, of grace and forgiveness; a clarion call for all those loaded with the weight of this world to come to him and find rest for our souls. Why wouldn't everyone want him? But they don't. Just like the available peace that cannot be fully explained, there is something else of the invisible kind that goes beyond explanation; the motivation of one who does not want peace that much if it also requires becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ. There is an arrogance of self and a pride that refuses to be subdued; the player that also must be the coach, the one that is lost who insists she is a guide.

Jesus often used the phrase "whoever has ears to hear, should listen." The first presumption is all that heard him preach that phrase must have had ears capable of hearing, but I am convinced there is another lesson here. Many that had ears on their heads only had the capability to hear other kinds of messages; ones that fed their selfish desires and carnal goals. "How to get rich, lose weight, have great relationship and self-esteem without changing your life, quickly and conveniently." Even many extreme religious adherents wanted something else more than the presence of God in their lives; including the internal and external lift they got from the accolades of their own piety. "I am a good person, I don't need a savior."

While there will be some of our very own friends and neighbors that will continue to keep the self-help, positive-thinking spirituality, you can do it without Jesus, authors paying the rent and their kid's orthodontist bills this season, my encouragement is for all of us to humble ourselves and receive from Christ. It's simple and free! But then again, we quickly learn that relationship with the God of the universe is also deeply profound, and costly; you must let him do his work in you, and like cancer, some stuff is better for you gone from your life. If life is coming at you at supersonic speeds, or even if you have found a pace that is manageable, the invitation remains to come to Jesus and let him give you life.

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Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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Mid-Week Study:

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