

When the crowds press into Jesus,

He presses into the Father.



You and I are often pressed by the crowds, by cultural expectations of what a woman, a wife, a mom should be, by social media, by what our body, our house, our social life should look like, by familial expectations, fulfilling long held generational roles, by friends and bosses and neighbors and... and it all gets to be too much. You and I cannot be all things to all people. You and I cannot be what Instagram wants us to be at the same time as what our boss wants us to be at the same time as what our kids hope we will be at the same time as what our eating disorder wants us to be. The pressure of everyone's expectations has the great ability to create anxiety, fear, worry, settling, and giving in. We can lose a clear sense of who God has called us to be. And the best thing we can do when the pressure is starting to be too much is to sit with our Father, the One who made us, the One who calls us, the One who destines our life. He knows exactly who we are called to be. So when we forget, He will remind us.

Reflect

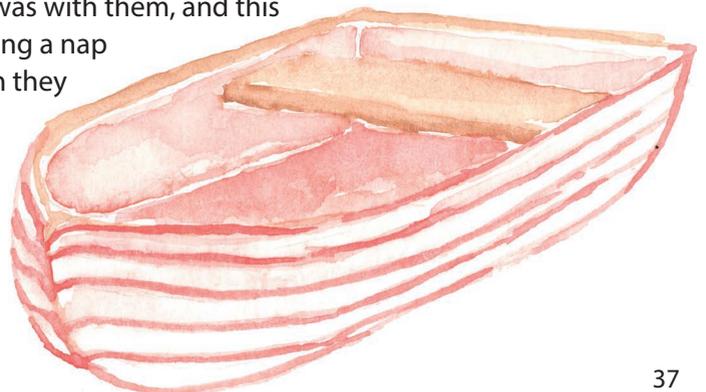
What are some pressures getting to you lately?

How do you see other people's expectations on your life getting in the way of the extraordinary God wants to do in your life?

How can you build time into your life to get away with the Father?

When you do get away with the Father, who do you often hear Him calling you to be?

While Jesus was spending time with the Father, His disciples were travelling in a boat. At one point the boat was 3-4 miles out,² surrounded by strong winds and high waves. These guys had been in a storm like this before, but last time Jesus was with them, and this time He wasn't. Last time, Jesus was annoyingly taking a nap while they all peed their pants, terrified. That's when they woke Jesus up and He told the wind and the waves what to do and they obeyed Him. But this time, they are being tormented by a storm and the One who bosses the wind and waves around is nowhere to be seen.



Reflect

If Jesus is all-knowing, why would He send His disciples right into the middle of a storm?

Would you conclude that this storm was God's will?

What do you tend to infer from being in the middle of difficult circumstances?

Warren Wiersbe, a theologian, wrote, "The storm came because they were in the will of God and not (like Jonah) out of the will of God. Did Jesus know that the storm was coming? Certainly! Did He deliberately direct them into the storm? Yes! They were safer in the storm in God's will than on land with the crowds out of God's will. We must never judge our security on the basis of circumstances alone."³

Wow, what a challenge! Most of us judge our security based on our circumstances. If Jesus sent them ahead, knowing they would face this storm, we can assume, contrary to the cheap faith we have been sold, that being in God's will does not always assure "smooth sailing."

Reflect

Why do we assume being in God's will looks like smooth sailing?

What might God have for these men to learn, gain or witness by allowing them to experience this storm?

Have you learned, gained or witnessed something from experiencing a storm that you can look back upon and be grateful for?

The disciples were exhausted from battling the elements all night and around 4 a.m.,⁴ they saw what looked like a ghost. They started crying out in fear. The Bible says "... *Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake.*" Apparently Jesus didn't have his own raft. These guys come unglued and Jesus says, "*Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.*" This expression, "It is I," was often used by God in the Old Testament when He revealed Himself.⁵ Based on what these guys in the storm heard and saw, they had to wonder if Jesus was actually God in their midst.

God was known to pull off miracles with water. God used Moses to part the Red Sea to set His people free. God wanted to confront an unbelieving nation who had put their faith in Baal, the rain god, so He gave Elijah the ability to declare a drought and a downpour showing them who's actually boss over the rain. God stopped the flow of the Jordan River so that His people would know He was with them. God heard the Israelites complaining of thirst in the desert, wishing to go back to slavery, so God used Moses to call water out of a rock. God saw Jonah running from the call on his life, so He moved His Divine chess pieces. As Jonah got tossed out of a boat, a whale opened its mouth at the right place at the right time to serve as a time out until Jonah could get to a place to say yes to also being at the right place at the right time.

There are so many miracles where God shows He has limitless power over water and Jesus demonstrated the same. Jesus turned water into wine at a wedding two thousand years ago, which some of you still praise Him for. Jesus healed a man born blind with His own spit and mud. Jesus could see through water to know where to catch fish. He demonstrated this crazy ability with Peter one time when he was experiencing some seriously disappointing fishing. Jesus told Peter exactly where to put his nets and the boat became so full of fish it almost sank. Jesus did this again after He beat death like a boss and then showed up to Peter and the guys to say, "Heyo! I'm back." They were out on a boat frustrated because they couldn't catch a darn thing. Jesus directed their poles and they bagged 153 bad boys. And here Jesus was defying gravity and walking on the very waves they feared. I love that

*Jesus has the power
to tread on the very
thing we fear.*