



BY CHRIS
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The Gift of God's 'No'

We often think of Jesus as the one who welcomes, heals, and gives – but throughout his ministry, Jesus also said no. Those 'no's' were deeply purposeful. He said no to staying in Samaria (Luke 9:51-56), no to requests for political power (Mark 10:35-40; John 6:15), and no to stopping his teaching for the sake of his family (Matthew 12:46-50). Perhaps his most famous no was to the isolated, naked, bleeding, and screaming demoniac, who had just been wonderfully restored:

'As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, 'Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you" (Mark 5:18-19).

The Lord has done so much for us. In many ways, Jesus at the cross became like the demoniac: isolated from his community, stripped, bleeding, and crying out like a madman, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Matthew 27:46). He experienced our evil so we could know his mercy. Like the restored man, I too experienced a moment when I longed to follow Jesus in one particular way – and he lovingly said no.

In 2001, I felt powerless. On the surface, things looked ok, but inside I was trapped in destructive behaviours and hopelessness. After spending a week with a group of Christian surfers in Newquay, things began to change. I saw genuine faith grounded in reason, the imperfect but evident purity of their lives, and supernatural moments I couldn't

explain away. At the end of that week, I surrendered everything – my life, plans, and future – all for Jesus – and experienced the profound mystery of his love.

Starting university weeks later, I was eager to share what Jesus had done for me. I was ready to quit everything else, but when I asked two friends to pray, they shared a picture: God was pulling me back in a catapult. It wasn't time yet to be released into full-time ministry – but when the moment came, I would go further. It was a no – but a no with promise.

Seven challenging years followed. I lost my father, Rob, far too young. I wrestled through early marriage struggles and faced tough work environments. It was a refining time – painful, but not wasted. Then, in a moment of unexpected confirmation, a Christian mentor – unaware of the catapult vision – prayed: 'I see a picture of a catapult. I believe God is saying it's time for you to be released.' I was deeply moved, sensing God's fatherly care and timing.

Just weeks later, I was invited into a full-time role at the church where I now lead the team. I also serve with ChristCentral, a UK family of churches, and work with the Evangelical Alliance in Yorkshire. My heart, in unity with MET, remains the same: to tell all, of all Jesus has done for us.

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