

3 Powerful Ways You Can Give Others the Gift of Your Unhurried Presence This Christmas

I have fond memories of Christmases past. Memories of when the kids were little and we decorated the tree, baked cookies, created traditions and opened presents. But looking back, I have regrets about how hurried the Christmas season was.

As I've been reflecting on the Christmas story, I'm struck by the time Mary and Elizabeth spent together. According to Luke 1:56, Mary spent three months with Elizabeth. I can just imagine them sitting and having coffee together, reflecting on the miracle of both their pregnancies. They likely processed their hopes and fears for their babies. Perhaps they spent time chatting about the angelic visitations they had both experienced. Undistracted by cellphones and computers, they likely spent long hours in deep conversation. What a beautiful example of deep friendship and fellowship!

As we enter this sacred time of year when we celebrate the birth of our Savior, we need to remember that His call is to love others. We can't really love others well unless we slow down long enough to focus on them, enjoy them and engage with them. In all the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, I'd like to offer a challenge: Let's seek to give those we love the gift of our unhurried presence this year. What does that look like in practical terms? Here are just a few suggestions:

Turn off your phone. I believe we are more distracted than ever before. Don't throw out your cellphone, but do set limits. It's hard to go to coffee with someone if they're scanning their phone the entire time. Dare to put your phone

away several times per day—perhaps start with 15 or 20 minutes twice a day. If you're raising a family, pass a basket at the dinner table and have everyone put their phone in the basket. Put the basket in a different room so you can offer one another your full presence.

Recently, one of my dear friends and I had coffee together. Neither of us had our phones out, and it was so life-giving! We talked about the Lord and what He was teaching us both and how we could pray for each other. We shared the struggles and triumphs of the past few months. I'm convinced many feel disconnected because they're living a distracted life. Put your phone away and see how much more connected you feel.

Take charge of your schedule. No one is going to set boundaries for you. You need to do that yourself. So, rather than letting others run your schedule, take charge. Think through what's reasonable and enjoyable and then say no to everything else. Will others misunderstand? Quite possibly, yes. But it's OK. Give yourself permission to feel misunderstood. The truth is, if you're wanting meaningful connection, less is better than more during the holidays.

Practice stillness every day. The psalmist wrote, "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10). For so many of us, stillness is torture! But here's the thing: Your body and soul need stillness to connect with God. When you first wake up in the morning, practice being still for a few minutes. Sit before the Lord and ask Him to speak to you and then listen. Turn off the clutter in your mind. Surrender your to-do list and just be silent. You might try repeating this phrase during your stillness time: "Jesus, I love you."

Friend, getting things done is never more important than seeking a loving relationship with God and others. Seek to give others the gift of your unhurried self this season, and the amazing surprise will be that you will feel more connected and happier yourself. {eoa}

Becky Harling, an author, certified speaker, leadership coach and trainer with the John Maxwell Team, is an energetic and motivational international speaker inspiring audiences to overcome their greatest life challenges and reach their full God-given potential. Her most recent book is *How to Listen So People Will Talk*. Her husband, Steve Harling, is the president of *Reach Beyond*, a nonprofit organization seeking to be the voice and hands of Jesus around the world. Connect with Becky at [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

This article originally appeared at [The Christian Entrepreneur](#).