

A woman named Maggie Perkins worked as a teacher for six years. Then, back in 2018, she gave birth to a daughter, and she discovered that if she stayed late at school, her daycare would impose a fine on her. So, she began quiet quitting.

For Perkins, this meant leaving school as soon as her official hours were over. “Within education, above and beyond isn’t compensated,” she said to *CNBC*. According to surveys, the typical teacher works 54 hours per week. Perkins decided that she wasn’t going to do it anymore. So, she set a boundary and stuck to it.

Eventually, she quit teaching entirely and began to pursue a Ph.D. But she continues to advise teachers on quiet quitting, telling them not to bring work home, or to spend their personal money on classroom supplies. Quiet quitting is “a survival tactic,” she says. “It’s a coping mechanism.”

Apparently, these days more and more people are taking this approach. They are not actually quitting their jobs, and staying home, but are stopping the practice of going above and beyond. In fact, a recent survey revealed that 21 percent of Americans now describe themselves as quiet quitters.

“I’m not going to overwork myself anymore,” said one young IT professional. “Quiet quitting is a self-care tactic,” said another, a freelance writer and content creator. It means that you do the job you are paid to do, and nothing more.

The importance of setting boundaries has a long biblical tradition, going back to the Ten Commandments. “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy,” said God to Moses. “Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work.” The Sabbath day is all about boundaries. It is a reminder that we are valuable for who

we are, not for what we do. We are precious children of God, not cogs in a well-oiled machine.

Now, if quiet quitting means maintaining a day of rest, then we should all be quitters. At least one day a week. But there is also a negative side to this trend, one that involves phoning it in, doing the bare minimum, and not caring about our labors. If we quietly quit in that way, then you might say we have a problem.

I'm fairly certain that we can all agree that Jesus does not want us to be quitters, rather he wants us to be engaged deeply in life, just as he was. In today's Gospel story from John, Jesus predicts that he will leave the disciples, but this does not mean that he will quit on them. He promises that God will give them "another Counselor to be with you forever." And the counselor he is referring to is not a guidance counselor, or a vocational counselor, or a mental health counselor, or a marriage counselor. Instead, it is a *parakletos*: A counselor who stays with you, encourages you, comforts you, helps you, and advocates for you.

But, According to Biblical scholars the Greek word *parakletos* is tough to translate into English, since it includes a range of meanings. And it varies depending on your preferred Bible translation. For instance, the *parakleto* can be referred to as a companion, a helper, a comforter, a friend, a counselor, or an advocate. And yet, however you translate the word, it means that God is never going to quit on us. Our Lord will stay close beside us, working for good in our lives.

A former New Testament Professor named Gail O'Day points out that what this counselor does is not new, "but is a continuation of the work of Jesus." The counselor is "the Spirit of truth," which connects to Jesus being "the way and the truth and the life." The counselor is one who "lives with you and will be in you," which is exactly what Jesus promises he will do when he says, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."

The truth of the matter, is that there is no quitting with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. All three persons of the Trinity are present and active in our lives, even when we are feeling stressed and overwhelmed and ready to quit. All three are seen most clearly in the face of Jesus, the One who never takes his foot off the gas but keeps us moving forward. He remains engaged with us, giving us his truth, life and love, and he invites us to remain connected to him. And when it comes to following Jesus, there is never any reason to quit.

First of all, Jesus *guides us in the truth*. This is the truth that we can grasp only when we look at the life, death and resurrection of Christ. This truth is not “something that you get out of a test tube, or a math formula,” says New Testament scholar N.T. Wright. “We don’t have truth in our pockets. Philosophers and judges don’t own it. ... Jesus has come to give evidence of this truth. He is himself the truth.”

And our Lord and Savior guides us in his truth, showing us how important it is to love not only our friends, but also our enemies. To turn the other cheek. To go the second mile. His truth leads us to welcome children, to feed the hungry, to heal the sick, to be a friend to outcasts, and to lead lives of service and sacrifice. “What Jesus did on the cross is what truth is and does,” says Wright. “Truth is what Jesus is ... Jesus died for Barabbas, and for Israel, for the world, and for you and me.” So, if you are looking for the truth, you don’t have to look any further than Jesus.

Next, Jesus *gives us new life*. “Because I live,” says Jesus to his disciples, “you also will live.” Jesus is speaking to his followers the night before his death on the cross, but he is assuring them that when he is raised to new life, they will experience new life as well. He promises to remain engaged with all who follow him, saying, “On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.” For Jesus, new life comes from remaining engaged.

Last summer, “there was much discussion of the concept of ‘quiet quitting,’” writes author Laura Vanderkam, “doing the bare minimum at work.” She was not surprised by this, especially after two years of pandemic uncertainty and stress. “When you’re exhausted and overwhelmed, it feels like **something** needs to give,” she says, “and for many, that seems to be the pursuit of excellence at work. But is taking your foot off the gas the answer?”

No, it’s not. She has “come to realize that the opposite of burnout isn’t doing nothing, or even scaling back. The opposite of burnout is engagement.” And I would imagine that Jesus would agree with her. New life comes from our being actively engaged as a follower of Christ. “If you love me, you will obey what I command,” says Jesus. And what are we to obey? “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Our engagement as disciples is shown in our love for one another. Nothing more, nothing less. Love for our brothers and sisters in the church. Love for our neighbors of different faiths, races, sexual orientations, and nationalities. Love for our opponents across the many divisions that are afflicting our nation today. The command is clear: Love one another!

Of course, that is easier said than done, and it can be quite tough for us at times, but fortunately Jesus promises us His love. “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me,” says Jesus. “He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.” Our Lord invites us to engage with him by keeping his commands and loving him, and he promises that both he, and God the Father, will love us in return. And our involvement with Jesus is never like a job that makes endless demands on us without any recognition or affirmation. No, Jesus vows that he will love us and

show himself to us. He will never abandon us but will continue to give us the gifts of his presence, truth, and love.

In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus uses an unexpected image to reveal his powerful love for his people. Speaking to the city of Jerusalem during the last week of his earthly ministry, Jesus says, “how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.” Jesus describes himself as a mother hen, gathering her chicks in a spirit of love and protection.

That is such a wonderful image for us to keep in mind on Mother’s Day, as we think about Jesus never quitting on the people he loves. Like the mothers in our lives who have made sacrifices, who have put our needs above their own, who have loved us even when we were difficult to love, and who never quit on us, he always goes above and beyond, never being satisfied with the bare minimum. Jesus guides us in the truth, gives us new life, promises us his love, he remains eternally engaged with us, and he asks us to do the same with him. Jesus never quits on us. So, let’s not quit on him. Amen.