



Pause on Purpose

“Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” Mark 6:31

Ernie Johnson Jr. knows baseball. His father announced three decades’ worth of major-league games, following the Braves from Milwaukee to Atlanta. In the quarter century since Ernie inherited the microphone, he has covered six sports on three continents, voicing blowouts and nail-biters, interviewing losers and buzzer beaters.

But one game stands out above all the rest. Not because of who played, but because of who stopped playing. Ernie was a nine-year-old Little Leaguer, dutifully playing shortstop. An opposing batter hit a ground rule double that bounced

over the fence. Two outfielders scampered over the fence to retrieve the ball so the game could continue. (Apparently the league operated on a tight budget.)

Both teams waited for them to return. They waited ... and waited ... but no one appeared. Concerned coaches finally jogged into the outfield and scaled the fence. Curious players, including Ernie, followed them. They found the missing duo just a few feet beyond the fence, gloves dropped on the ground, found ball at their feet, blackberries and smiles on their faces.

The two players had stepped away from the game.

How long since you did the same? We need regular

recalibrations. Besides, who couldn’t use a few blackberries? But who has time to gather them? You have car-pools to run; businesses to run; sales efforts to run; machines, organizations, and budgets to run. You gotta run.

Jesus understands. He knew the frenzy of life. People back-to-backed his calendar with demands. But he also knew how to step away from the game.

Having withstood the devil’s wilderness temptation and his hometown’s harsh rejection, Jesus journeyed to Capernaum, where the citizens give him a ticker-tape reception.

They were astonished at His teaching. (Luke 4:32)

The story of what he had done spread like wildfire throughout the whole re-

gion. (v. 37 NLT)

People throughout the vil-lage brought sick family members to Jesus. No matter what their diseases were, the touch of his hand healed every one. (v. 40 NLT)

Could Christ want more? Enthralled masses, just-healed believers, and thou-sands who will go where he leads. So Jesus...Rallied a movement? Organized a leadership team? Mobilized a political-action society?

No. He baffled the public-relations experts by placing the mob in the rearview mirror and ducking into a wild-life preserve, a hidden cove, a vacant building, a deserted place.

Verse 42 identifies the reason: “the crowd ... tried to keep Him from leaving them.”

More than once he exercised crowd control. “When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he told his followers to go to the other side of the lake” (Matt. 8:18 NCV).

When the crowd ridiculed his power to raise a girl from the dead, he evicted them from the premises. “After the crowd had been thrown out of the house, Je-sus went into the girl’s room and took hold of her hand, and she stood up” (Matt. 9:25 NCV).

After a day of teaching, “Jesus left the crowd and went into the house” (Matt. 13:36 NCV).

Though surrounded by possibly twenty thousand fans, he turned away from them: “After Jesus had sent the crowds away” (Matt. 15:39 CEV).

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Christ repeatedly escaped the noise of the crowd in order to hear the voice of God.

He resisted the undertow of the people by anchoring to the rock of his purpose: employing his uniqueness (to “preach ... to the other cities also”) to make a big deal out of God (“the kingdom of God”) everywhere he could.

And aren’t you glad he did? Suppose he had heeded the crowd and set up camp in Capernaum, reasoning, “I thought the whole world was my target and the cross my destiny. But the entire town tells me to stay in Capernaum. Could all these people be wrong?”

Yes, they could! In defiance of the crowd, Je-sus turned his back on the Capernaum pastorate and followed the will of God. Doing so meant leaving some sick people unhealed and some confused people untaught. He said no to good things so he could say yes to the right thing: his unique call.

Not an easy choice for anyone.

God may want you to leave your Capernaum, but you’re staying. Or he may want you to stay, and you’re leaving. How can you know unless you mute the crowd and meet with Jesus in a deserted place?

“Deserted” need not mean desolate, just quiet. Simply

a place to which you, like Jesus, depart. “Now when it was day, He departed” (Luke 4:42). “Depart” pre-supposes a decision on the part of Jesus. “I need to get away. To think. To ponder. To rechart my course.” He determined the time, select-ed a place. With resolve, he pressed the pause button on his life.

The devil implants taximeters in our brains. We hear the relentless tick tick, tick telling us to hurry, hurry, hurry, time is money ... resulting in this roaring blur called the human race.

But Jesus stands against the tide, countering the crescendo with these words: “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). Follow the example of Jesus, who “often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed” (Luke 5:16).

God rested after six days of work, and the world didn’t collapse. What makes us think it will if we do? (Or do we fear it won’t?)

Follow Jesus into the desert. A thousand and one voices will scream like banana-tree monkeys telling you not to. Ignore them. Heed him. Quit your work. Contemplate his. Accept your Maker’s invitation: “Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while” (Mark 6:31).

And while you are there, enjoy some blackberries.

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6th November

ACROSS

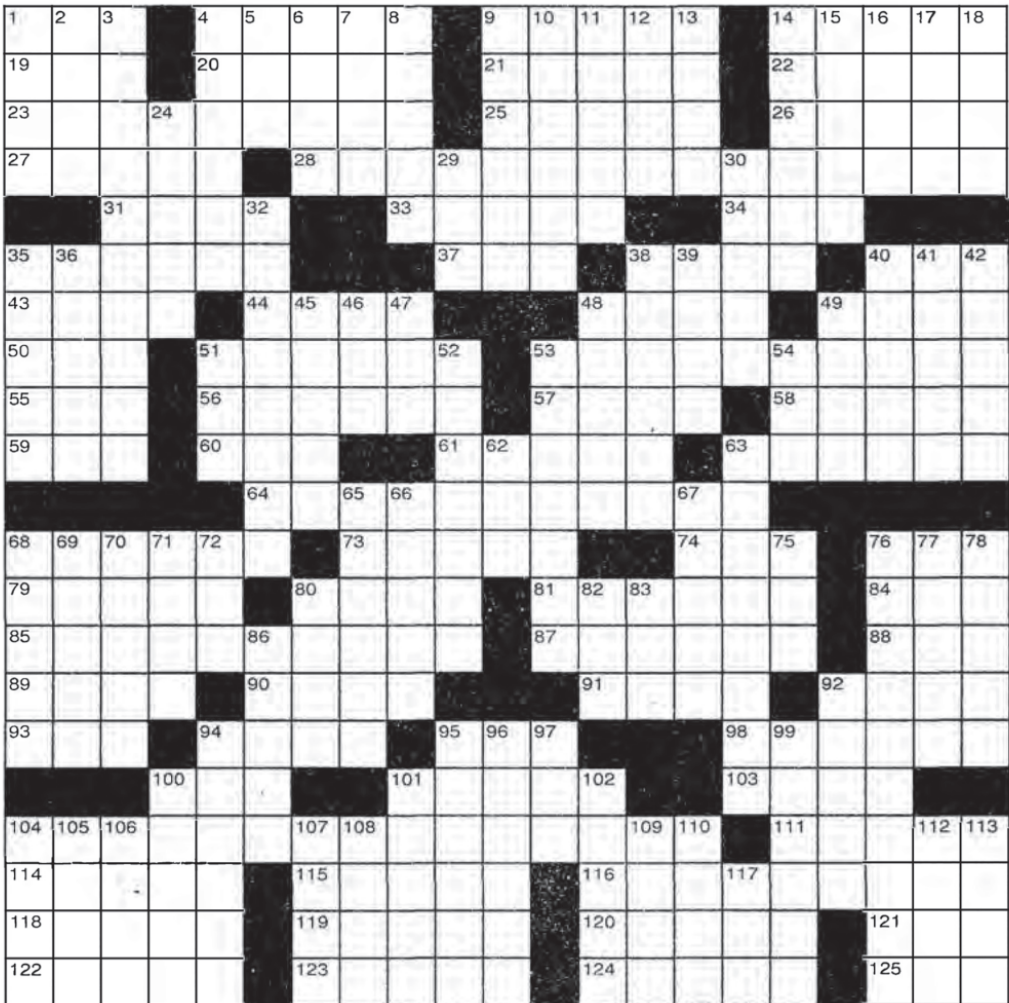
- 1 __ alai
4 “Lark’s Tongue in __” (King Crimson)
9 Mrs. who chewed the fat
14 Stunning defeat
19 Bruins great
20 R&R
21 Make ecstatic
22 Soap plant
23 Holmes, in retirement
25 Scruffs
26 Emulates an esne
27 Less loopy
28 Holmes’s debut
31 __ Indies
33 __Odin’s Sleipnir
34 “Huzzah!,” in Chihuahua
35 Vandyke, e.g.
37 Itinerary abbr.
38 Champ
40 Football zebra
43 Caddie’s kin
44 Pouches
48 Comet compo-nent
49 Sown, in heraldry
50 In toto
51 __ jacket
53 Holmes’s WWI case
55 Vegas cube
56 Verdi work
57 Pay for a hand
58 Brown in butter
59 Sun. talk
60 Schoolmarm’s hair arrange-ment
61 Expected
63 Irish __
64 221B __ (Holmes’s address)
68 Hart work
73 Just like ewe?
74 The, in Berlin
76 Play with some cats
79 Riyadh resident
80 Markdown tag
81 Removes a brooch
84 Maritime agcy.
85 Home of Holmes’s creator
87 Boxing units
88 Hebrew measure
89 Miller et al.
90 Property claim
91 Just lose it

DOWN

- 1 Tasks
2 Space
3 She intrigued Holmes
4 Sandarac wood
5 “The Handy-man” author Carolyn
6 __ Doc (Haitian kleptocrat)
7 Burlly Burl
8 Brand of breath mints
9 UPS user
10 Golfer Gary
11 __ transit
12 __ asteroid
13 Actress Harper
14 Boris Bade-nov’s partner Natasha
15 Love: Ital.
16 Snake shape
17 Parisian pronoun
18 Take a load off
24 “The Snowy Day” author
29 Actress Hagen
30 Terra __
32 Lab vessel
35 Spurs
36 Friend of Stan or Fran
38 Victorian dress support
39 __ Royale
40 Contradict
41 Be theatrical
42 Not as plentiful
45 Domain
46 Oxnard’s st.
47 __ vous plaît
48 Iranian coin
49 ER call
51 Boo-hoo sound
52 Big business in Barbuda
53 Arrogance
54 Compass reading
62 Taxpayer’s ID
63 Be resolute
65 Legit
66 Eau from France
67 Patsy’s pal (“Ab Fab”)
68 Lake Nasser’s dam
69 “Sleuth” star
70 Food fish
71 They’re laid at the track
72 Zero, to an English football announcer

75 Draft gp.

- 76 Holmes’s friend and chronicler
77 Santa __ Park
78 Belarus capital
80 SEATO’s sphere
82 Integers: abbr.
83 Witticism
86 Daughter of King Juan Carlos
92 Like a sea lion
94 Shadowed
95 __ bourgeoisie
96 Part of a rack
97 Family __ room
99 Summer bummers
100 Banter
101 Astringent powder
102 Florida cigar city
104 Increase
105 2002 retiree
106 Oeil-de-boeuf shape
107 Ship timber
108 Philippine port
109 Sp. wives
110 Guesses: abbr.
112 Dynamite
113 Small pest
117 Laugh start



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