

## Your God Is Too Silent

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Your God Is Too...Series

Psalm 1

How many of you are facing a major decision in the next 6 months, a decision which will significantly impact the course of your life? For example, if you are a young person you may be trying to decide whether you ought to go to college or, perhaps, join the military, or take a year off and travel, or do ministry. If you choose college, which college should you go to? Should you start off in a community college; should you pursue a four year degree? And where will that be? How much debt should you take on? When you go to college, what should your major be? Some of you already have Bachelor's degrees and are thinking about enrolling in a Master's program, or pursuing your doctorate.

Or many of you are applying for jobs, or thinking about leaving your current employment because you are unhappy. Some of you may be deciding whether or not to purchase a home, or to build a home. Should you get married? Who should you marry? Should you have a child? Should you have another child? Maybe you're in a situation where there are medical risks if you have a child. Should you try anyway? For some of you, your life-changing decision may be about bringing a foster child into your home. Or choosing to adopt a child.

And certainly it is not just young adults who are facing major decisions that may significantly impact the course of our lives. If you are middle-aged maybe you are wondering about how to raise a teenager who is going through a difficult time. Or a 20-something who is really struggling. Maybe you are single and it appears that you need to plan for being single for an extended period. Is it time for you to buy a home and to plan for your financial future without having a spouse to help shoulder the burden?

Maybe you're older and facing retirement, or you are retired. How should you live? Should you get involved with a particular volunteer opportunity, or a particular ministry? Some of you may be facing the possibility of running for office, or being involved in politics in a significant way. Should you do that?

For those of us who are followers of Christ, we believe that we shouldn't make important life decisions independently. When followers of Christ try to make decisions, we earnestly want to hear what God thinks about what we're doing. After all, we believe that God is awfully smart. He knows us. He knows what we need and what will bless our lives. God knows the future. He knows the other people we're thinking of getting involved with. He knows everything that's coming down the road. He knows what our health will be like. So, for the person who believes

in God and has a relationship with him, the most sensible thing in the world is to try to figure out what God thinks. We desperately need to hear his voice.

Now, for those who are interested in hearing God's voice, I don't know what method you use to hear God. Let me suggest some

### Bad ways to hear God

What are some bad ways to hear God? First, of course, there is the ever popular finger in the Bible method. What's the finger in the Bible method? You heard about the young man who wanted to know whether he should go out with a really pretty girl named Lisa. So he opened the bible and stuck his finger into it and landed on Proverbs 6.25 which says:

Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyes.

And so he said to the Lord, "Who should I go out with, if it is not Lisa? Who should I go out with?" And he stuck his finger in the Bible again and landed on Isaiah 55.12,

You shall go out with joy...

And so he looked around for a girl named Joy. Unfortunately, Joy didn't want to go out with him.

And then there was the man who told his friend that God had spoken to him and told him to take up cigarette smoking. The man said, "Really. How did God do that?"

The first man said, "Well, you know, I opened the Bible and put my finger in it and came to the verse which said, 'Do you not know that your body is the temple of God.'"

His friend said, "Well, how does knowing that your body is the temple of God encourage you to take up smoking?"

He said, "Well, then, I flipped in my Bible again to Revelation 15.8 and it says:

And the temple was filled with smoke.

Opening the Bible and pulling a random verse out of context is probably not the best way for hearing God.

There is, of course, the ever popular open-door method. In 1 Cor 16 the Apostle Paul mentions that he is going to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost because a wide door for effective work had opened up to him. So according to the open door method, whenever God opens a door for you, you ought to walk through that open door.

But is an open door always the way God is speaking? Well, the door was open, so it must be God's will for me to walk through it. In 2 Cor 2 the Apostle Paul speaks about another open door. Here is what he says:

2 Co 2:12-13

12Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me,

13I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said good-bye to them and went on to Macedonia.

Apparently, an open door simply means an opportunity. But not every opportunity is a sign of what God wants you to do.

Some people believe that God's will is always going to be the opposite of what they want. I really don't want to move from America and live overseas; so that must be what God wants. Because I can't imagine working with teens, it is probably God's will for my life.

Marlene and I talked to a woman once who said that she decided to marry her husband because he was precisely the kind of person that she didn't like. She just knew that saying yes to this man's proposal was God's way of putting her will to death.

You wonder what someone believes about who God is if given the choice between two marriage proposals – one from someone you love; and one from someone you don't – that God would want you to marry the person you don't love because that would be good for you.

Finally, there is the signs method. Lord, if you want me to stay in this challenging marriage, send 3 white doves to my front porch in the night. If you want me to leave my marriage have them play a Taylor Swift song in the next 2 hours on this pop music radio station.

God does speak and God does want to be heard. In the Bible there are entities who do not speak. Look with me at Psalm 115:2:

Psalm 115:2 (NIV)

2 Why do the nations say,  
"Where is their God?"

In other words, those who are far from God always say, "What's your proof of God's existence? Why should we believe in God who never speaks?" The psalmist answers:

Psalm 115:3–7 (NIV)

3 Our God is in heaven;  
he does whatever pleases him.

- 4 But their idols are silver and gold,  
made by human hands.  
5 They have mouths, but cannot speak,  
eyes, but cannot see.  
6 They have ears, but cannot hear,  
noses, but cannot smell.  
7 They have hands, but cannot feel,  
feet, but cannot walk,  
nor can they utter a sound with their throats.

The entity in the Bible that never speaks, that's always mute, that never talks in a way that we can hear or understand is not God. It is idols, false gods, gods of the nations. Those are the gods who cannot speak and do not speak.

I've been doing a series titled "Your God is Too..." I've been talking about all of the reduced, distorted views we have of God that keep us from really experiencing God in our day. The views that keep us from loving God and worshipping God and enjoying God's presence. If you are going to connect with God in a personal way, if you are going to experience God there is nothing more important than hearing God's voice. But, unfortunately, most people don't know how to hear God. So most people have a very limited experience of God.

Today, as I continue in this series about experiencing God, I've called my talk, "Your God is Too Silent." Let's pray.

Psalm 1 (NIV)

- 1 Blessed is the one  
who does not walk in step with the wicked  
or stand in the way that sinners take  
or sit in the company of mockers,  
2 but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,  
and who meditates on his law day and night.  
3 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
which yields its fruit in season  
and whose leaf does not wither—  
whatever they do prospers.  
4 Not so the wicked!  
They are like chaff  
that the wind blows away.  
5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.  
6 For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

## The best way to hear God

You know, the best way that God speaks to people today is not through unusual signs, it is through his written Word, through the Bible. Now, I know that starting here is not very spectacular. Bible study does not have the sizzle, the sexiness like some of the spectacular stories we hear about the way God speaks today. God does speak in remarkable ways.

One of the most remarkable stories I've heard involved John Wimber, the founder of the Vineyard. Once he was traveling cross-country on a plane. He was tired and just relaxing in his seat. As he looked across the aisle, he suddenly saw the word "adultery" written across a man's forehead sitting near him. John rubbed his eyes and looked again. And as John looked again, in his mind's eye he saw the word "adultery" clearly written across this man's forehead and then he got the name of the woman that the man was having an affair with.

Now, John had gotten used to hearing God's voice in remarkable ways and so he asked the Lord what was he to do with this information. He felt like the Lord said: "You need to share it with this man."

John leaned across the aisle and said: "Does the name [I'll use the name] Sandra mean anything to you?"

All of the blood drained from this man's face. He said: "We need to talk." In those days they had a lounge in the plane, so John and the man went to the lounge together. John's word to him was deadly accurate. The man said: "The reason I got so nervous was that I am sitting next to my wife. I didn't want her to hear what you were saying."

But through the course of private conversation, the man repented of his sin. Right there in the lounge the man gave his life to Christ. Then he went back and told his wife what happened and John had an opportunity to lead her to Christ as well.

Wouldn't you love to have that kind of an experience? I don't mean, wouldn't you love to be the person whose sin is exposed on an airplane. I mean wouldn't you love to be the person who gets to reveal the secret so that people experience the reality of God in their lives and the person recognizes their need for a Savior. Wouldn't you like to have that kind of an experience? I would.

Well, friend, the place to start in hearing God's voice is not by reading God's words on other people's foreheads. The place to start is by reading the Word of God as it is written in the Bible.

Mark Twain called the Bible

A classic! – A book which people praise and don't read.

Let me share with you some facts about the Bible.

- The average American household owns 4 Bibles
- 88% of Americans own at least one Bible
- Americans spend over half a billion dollars a year on new Bibles
- Just 1 in 7 adults say they read the Bible with any regularity
- 33% of Millennials say they never read the Bible

### Why the Bible?

Why would anyone believe that this book called The Bible is divinely inspired and when we read it we're hearing God, our Creator, speaking to us through its words? Now, I could give many talks as I try to answer this question alone. Why do people believe that God speaks to them through this book called The Bible? But let me speak more personally to you about why I began to believe that God speaks through the Bible.

Most of you know that I was raised in a Jewish family. I studied the Bible in Hebrew growing up going to Hebrew school, but never really understood what I was reading, or took it seriously. In college when I began to read the Bible in English for the first time, I was amazed by all the prophecies in the Old Testament, written hundreds of years before Jesus was born, that specifically pointed to Jesus and Jesus alone as the Messiah. So for example:

- Jesus was born where the prophet Micah said Messiah would be born – in Bethlehem (Micah 5.2)
- Isaiah predicted that the Messiah would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7.14)
- The Psalms predicted the Messiah's betrayal, his accusation by false witnesses, and the manner of his death (pierced in his hands and feet, even though crucifixion wouldn't be invented for hundreds of years) (Psalm 22)
- Jesus performed miraculous deeds of healing and deliverance in accordance with the prophecies of Isaiah (Isaiah 35)
- Jesus was rejected by his own people as was prophesied (Isaiah 53)
- Jesus suffered horribly before his execution as the prophets declared (Psalm 22)
- Jesus died and rose from the dead just as the prophets said the Messiah would do (Isaiah 53, Psalm 22)

But there is one most remarkable prophecy in the Book of Daniel which extraordinarily predicts the exact date of the Messiah's execution. Here is what we read in Daniel 9.25-26:

Daniel 9:25–26 (NIV)

25 “Know and understand this: From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’ It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.  
26 After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing...

Now, seven was Daniel’s prophetic way of speaking about seven years.

1 “seven” = 7 years

Daniel then goes on and speaks about seven sevens of years.

$7 \times 7 = 49$  years

He also speaks about 62 sevens of years.

$62 \times 7 = 434$  years

$49 + 434 = 483$  years

History tells us that there was a decree, just like Daniel said there would be, a decree to rebuild Jerusalem. And the decree to rebuild Jerusalem took place in 457 BC. Daniel said there would be 49 years, seven 7’s, and the walls of Jerusalem and the streets and moats would be rebuilt. And they were by 408 BC.

$457 - 49 = 408 \text{ BC}$

And then we count forward another 434 years, or 52 sevens, or 483 years from the starting date, and it takes us to 27AD. And Daniel says in this year, 27AD, the Anointed One, the Messiah (that’s the literal meaning of Anointed One), will be cut off.

26 After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing...

Bible scholars argue about whether 27AD is the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, a ministry which would end with his execution, or if in fact 27AD was the year of his crucifixion.

But as a Jew reading the Bible for the first time in English, and being told my whole life that Messiah had not yet come, that we Jews were waiting for the Messiah, and that Jesus couldn’t possibly be the Messiah, I read in the Hebrew Bible a prophecy from the Jewish prophet Daniel about Messiah being cut off, executed, in 27AD just as history tells us was the approximate date of Jesus’ execution.

There are more than four dozen major predictions about the Messiah in the Old Testament which have led many Jewish people, including myself, to believe that the Messiah is none other than Jesus of Nazareth. You know with only six bits of information we can send a letter to someone anywhere in the world and assuming the Post Office is working right, have that letter delivered to one person out of 7 billion people in the world. If you just have the person's name, the number of their house, their street, their city, their state, and their country, you can identify one person in the world out of 7 billion. There are more than 4 dozen bits of information within the Old Testament about who Messiah would be. And there is only one person in history who fulfills the more than four dozen prophecies – Jesus of Nazareth! When I began to read the Old Testament as a Jewish person, I began to hear God speaking to me personally saying to me, “Jesus is your Messiah. You need to trust in him.”

So Psalm 1 begins with this word: Blessed. We read:

*Ps 1:1 Blessed are those who do not walk in step with the wicked*

Now, you need to understand that there are two words for blessed in the Old Testament and also two words for blessed in the New Testament. This word for blessed leans towards the word “happy.” The Hebrew word is,

Ashre = Happy

It is where we get the Old Testament name Asher from. I have a grandson named Asher. And when he was born, I laid hands on him and prayed that he might experience the full meaning of his name, Asher, which means happy one, fortunate one, blessed one. And he really is living out the destiny of his name – Asher is a happy, blessed child.

Psalm 1 is giving us the secret to a happy life. Psalm 1 says if you want to be happy with the happiness of God, if you want to experience a solid, consistent joy in your life, here is the way you are going to find it. The psalmist links our happiness to who we listen to – God in his written word, or the counsel of those who don't know God. The psalmist understands that our happiness in life is determined very much by the advice we listen to.

So Psalm 1 begins negatively with v. 1.

*Ps 1:1 Blessed are those who do not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers,*

You listen to the wrong people – people who don't know God or don't listen to the Bible, you follow the wrong counsel, you will not be happy. Now, what does it mean to walk in step with the wicked? Or more accurately translated,

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked.”



What is the counsel of the wicked?

Counsel that is bad

Well, of course, there is the specific counsel that people give you. The advice you might receive from a friend or a family member about your marriage that takes no account of God or the Bible. “Here is what I would do if my husband ever said that to me.” “Here is the way I lie to my girlfriend.” “Here’s the name of an attorney that I used for my first divorce.” The counsel of the wicked is counsel devoid of the mind of God. It takes no account of what God says to us in the Bible.

Then the psalmist goes on and paints for us what looks like a downward spiral.

*Ps 1:1 Blessed are those who do not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers,*

We have a picture of someone who is walking in bad company, then standing, and then sitting down. I think in the Bible of the apostle Peter during the trial of Jesus. We read in Luke 22:54,

*Lk 22:54 Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance.*

Peter was walking with unbelievers at a distance from Jesus. Then in John 18:18,

*Jn 18:18 It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.*

Here Peter stood. And then in Luke 22:55,

*Lk 22:55 And when some there had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them.*

Peter sat down with them. And what did Peter end up doing? He walked with people who hated Jesus. He stood with them; he sat down with them; and for those of you who know the story of Peter, he ended up denying the Lord. He turned his back on Jesus. That’s the impact of having a deepening personal involvement with folks. You find yourself moving away from God, adopting the attitudes and behaviors of those around you. And finally, turning your back on God altogether.

But Psalm 1.2 points to a different way of doing life, a way that involves listening to God and hearing God’s voice.

Psalm 1:2 (NIV)  
2 but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,  
and who meditates on his law day and night.

Here through the written Word of God, through the scripture, we listen to

Counsel that is good

How do we make this practical? How do we delight in God's Word? Or as the psalmist says, how do we mediate on it day and night?

I think there are three things that we need to really make this practical and make it our own. First of all, we need to slow down.

The need to slow down

Friend, the greatest obstacle to hearing God's voice in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is simple busyness. We Americans live overstuffed, over filled, over-stimulated lives. We eat too much. We shop too much. We own too much. We watch too much TV and spend too much time online. And we cram too much into our houses and into over-crowded lives. And if we were to be honest with ourselves, we would say that there is simply no room in our lives for the voice of God. We are, as a culture, addicted to busyness. It's no wonder we struggle to connect with God or hear his voice.

Everyone multi-tasks. Just look at what people do in the cars next to you on the highway. Here we are hurtling down the highway at 75+ mph in a 3000-4000 pound car and what are we doing? We are talking on our cell phone. A woman is putting on mascara in her rearview mirror. Someone else texting.

One day – true story – my wife, Marlene, and I were driving on I-270 on the north side of town. I was in the passenger seat-watching people pass by us in their cars. I noticed that every single driver that drove by us was doing something in addition to driving. I said to Marlene: "Look, he's on his cell phone. Look at her. She is putting on lipstick now in her rearview mirror. He's drinking coffee. Look at that!" Driving right next to us was a woman who had a bowl of cereal on her steering wheel and she was eating the bowl of cereal while driving 75 mph! She was flying by us and she was eating a bowl of cereal with a spoon and she was steering the car with the bottom of her bowl of cereal.

Now, you are not going to hear the voice of God very well when you are driving 75 mph steering your car with a bowl of cereal and trying not to dump it in your lap.

Our first calling as followers of Christ is to fellowship with Christ. Our first calling is not activity for Christ. Our first calling, friend – your first calling is fellowship with Jesus Christ. The truth is,

let's be honest, most churches, including this church at least some of the time, takes the American addiction to activity and brings it right into the church – a lot of activity, but not a lot of intimacy with Christ. We do and do, and then we burn out. We hit a wall. We try a million things to succeed in life, to succeed in our parenting, to succeed in our relationships, to succeed in ministry, instead of simply taking the time to listen to God.

If you are stuck right now, if you are frustrated, if you've hit a wall in an area of your life, if you don't have an answer, if you are just spinning your wheels and not making any forward progress, why not slow the rpm's down long enough to ask God and to listen for his voice? Ask God, "What do you have for me? What's your plan for my life? How should I think about the future?" You know, the Lord really is smarter than you and me. God is infinitely more creative than we are in coming up with solutions. He sees what we cannot see. He can see around the curve. He sees the future. He knows the consequences of our decisions. He sees the heart. He sees below the surface. God sees what we cannot see. He has answers for your life, especially, friend, when you are at a crossroads.

So there is a need to slow down, if we want to hear God. The second thing we need is

#### The need to have a plan

As I said, almost every American owns a Bible. One Christian publisher currently sells more than 60 different editions of the Bible. They have:

- An All-Seasons Bible
- A Skater's Bible
- A Surfer's Bible
- A Cowboy Bible
- A Stay-At-Home Mom's Bible

And for kids they even sell

#### A Super-Hero's Bible

There is a Bible available for people who are too busy to read the Bible. It is called

#### The Hundred Minute Bible

You can learn everything you need to know from the Bible in less than 2 hours.

I won't ask for a show of hands, but just between you and God, let me ask you a personal question: If want to hear God's voice, if you are convinced that God is smarter than you and he'd be good to listen to, do you have a plan for regular personal Bible reading? May I suggest that if you don't have a plan, here are a few different ways for you to get started. Every week

we hand out personal Bible Studies that follow up my messages. They're on the back of the outlines. If you come to Vineyard Columbus, we give you an outline so that you can take some notes during the message and then we have follow up Bible Studies, one for each day for the five days in the next week. If you don't have a plan, why not do the studies on the back of your outlines?

Second, on your way out of church either by the doors depending on your campus, out of the auditorium, or by the info counter we're handing out this week a simple plan for Bible Study. It is called

5x5

Five minutes of Bible reading five days a week. It tells you how to get started. If you are not doing anything at all – this is not for the advanced Bible scholars among us – but if you don't read the Bible at all; it's just not part of your routine, start with 5x5. Get started. Start somewhere.

Third, if you are completely new to the Bible and you say, "I don't even know the story of the Bible," I've talked with a few really well-educated adults and you know where they started? I've talked with folks in the church with college degrees and they said, "I picked up the Action Bible which is written for children, and it's in comic-book form, and I read through that and it gave me the basic stories of the Bible. So I understood the storyline through the Action Bible before I picked up the Bible for itself." I thought what a great idea! If you've never read the Bible and you don't know how it works, pick up the Action Bible! Tell the bookstore manager here at Vineyard Columbus that you are buying it for your niece. You're buying The Action Bible for your kid. And then read it for yourself!

If you are interested in more serious Bible study, I highly recommend to you two books. The first is:

Cover photo of Search the Scriptures

I personally used this for years when I was getting started. The second is:

Cover photo of The InterVarsity Quiet Time Companion

Let me offer a little aside here for parents. If you are going to put a plan together to listen to what God is saying to you through the Bible, why not put a plan together for your family as well so that your family would listen to what God says through the scriptures. I personally read the Bible with my granddaughter. We read it at night before bedtime.

This leads to a very fundamental question: who is responsible for the raising and spiritual training of children according to the Bible? We say it in every baby dedication. Who is responsible for the spiritual training of children? Here is what we read in Deuteronomy 6:6-7:

Deuteronomy 6:6–7 (NIV)

6 These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

God says, we parents “impress the Commandments on your children.” You parents, not somebody else. You talk about God’s Commandments when you’re driving in the car. You, and not someone else. In the Old Testament and in Jewish tradition, the center of child-raising and religious teaching has always been the home. Many people in the church do not understand this basic Old Testament perspective.

Many Christians believe that it is God’s purpose that the church function as the main formative influence in terms of their children’s spiritual development. But the church was never intended to be a substitute for parents. Nothing in God’s plan has ever replaced the home and parents as bearing the primary responsibility for imparting Christian values to our children.

The rabbis used to call the home a small sanctuary, or a miniature temple. One rabbi wrote that:

The Jew’s home has rarely been his “castle.” Throughout the ages it has been something far higher – his sanctuary.

~Joseph Hertz

Children were to learn God’s ways whether we’re talking about the Old Testament or the New Testament, children learn about God primarily in their own homes. Moms, dads, have you accepted the responsibility to develop your children spiritually?

Let me apply this. Parents are primarily responsible for raising their kids. But we parents cannot raise great kids by ourselves. We need a community of great people around us who come alongside of our kids and assist us in their raising. We are committed as a church to support you parents in the spiritual training of your kids.

Vineyard Columbus is a church that really values children!

You know, one way that you could demonstrate that you are a person who values children; that you don’t marginalize them, or push them out of the way, or say that “Well, children should be seen and not heard; it is someone else’s job...,” one way that you could as an individual help in the raising of kids is to participate in Children’s Ministry. This weekend and next weekend at all of our campuses we are recruiting folks to get involved with teaching our kids. To come

alongside parents so that their kids could hear God's Word through scripture. You could assist with that! After the service, why not go out into the lobby and meet one of the representatives from our Children's Ministry and see how you can get involved.

Now, in addition to scripture there are other ways to hear God.

### Other ways to hear God

Certainly other ways include prophecies, dreams, and visions. We'll be talking about some of those really important things in future weeks. But let me suggest another very practical way to hear God's voice in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, along with the scriptures. I like what Dr. James Dobson said years ago. He is a psychologist and a best-selling author and founder of Focus on the Family. He is a man who is very deliberate in trying to listen to God in his life and ministry. He described a very simple, practical way that he learned to listen to God and receive God's guidance for his life. He said:

*I get down on my knees and say, "Lord, I need to know what you want me to do and I am listening. Please speak to me through my friends, books, magazines I pick up and read, and through circumstances."*

This approach is really simple, but it is quite profound. What Dr. Dobson is doing is he is being active in listening to God and looking for God through the moments of his day. He is alerting himself, mobilizing himself to the multitude of creative ways that God may want to speak to him through different inputs in his daily life. I'm aware that God may want to speak to me through another person, or through something I am reading, or through circumstance, or through some thought that presses in on my soul. So we are paying attention during the day to what's going on inside of us and what's going on outside of us as potential vehicles for hearing God and experiencing him in our lives.

What's the result of hearing God?

### The result of hearing God

We see two very different results of life depending on what we're listening to. Here is what we read in v. 3.

Psalm 1:3 (NIV)

3 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
which yields its fruit in season  
and whose leaf does not wither—  
whatever they do prospers.

If you are rooted in God's Word, if you're rooted in listening to God, if you're listening to the advice of people who know God, your life is going to be, in the psalmist words, a fruitful life. It doesn't matter what season of life you're in, God will bring fruit in your life. If you are going through a hot, dry time the fruit that God may bring forth in your life will be the fruit of endurance, the fruit of perseverance. If you are going through a very difficult time relationally, the fruit might be the fruit of forbearance, or the fruit of patience, or the fruit of forgiveness towards someone who has hurt you.

See. As we listen to God's voice through a consistent and thoughtful reading and study of the Bible, we change. We become wise. The scripture gives us wisdom about how to handle relationships and how to relate to our money, and how to forgive, and how to deal with our jobs, and how to love.

But those who live apart from God are not like this. Here is what we read in v.4:

Psalm 1:4 (NIV)  
4 Not so the wicked!  
that the wind blows away.

Do you know what chaff is? When grain is threshed it's thrown into the air. The heavy grain sifts down and the chaff gets thrown away. The picture of those who are far from God is that they are rootless, they're weightless. We could say today that their lives are like snowflakes, or soap bubbles.

So there are two very different outcomes of life. Again, negatively, v. 5:

Psalm 1:5 (NIV)  
5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

And positively in v. 6:

Psalm 1:6 (NIV)  
6 For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

Where it says in v. 5:

Psalm 1:5 (NIV)  
5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

I don't believe that the psalmist is just talking about the end-time judgement when you and I are going to stand before God and get assessed for all that we've done in our lives. I think he is speaking to us about the outcome of forming a life that doesn't listen to God, that doesn't pay attention to what God is saying in his Word and through his Spirit. He is talking about the inevitable consequences of living a life independent of God's voice, just going at it yourself and trying to figure out the next steps entirely on your own.

What happens to the person who is rootless and weightless, who has no connection with God's mind? The judgement is not just an end-times judgement. What happens to the person in crisis moments when you are not deeply rooted in God's Word and you discover that you have cancer, or your spouse dies, or your spouse wants a divorce, or you're fired, or you run out of money, or you have a miscarriage, or you lose a parent? The psalmist says you won't stand. You are going to implode.

And on the other hand, for those who delight in listening to God, who are rooted by streams of water, no matter what happens, no matter what the future brings, as you grow in wisdom from God's Word, as you listen to God and you decide to go to school, you decide to get married, you decide to leave your job, or pursue a new job, you are going to be OK. And even if life is hard as it inevitably is for all of us, you are going to stand and you are going to prosper because you are committed to listen to God and be shaped by his Word. Let's pray.



**I.     Bad ways to hear God**

**II.    The best way to hear God**

- A. Why the Bible?
- B. Counsel that is bad
- C. Counsel that is good: Making it practical

- 1. The need to slow down
- 2. The need to have a plan
- 3. The need to listen

**III.   Other ways to hear God**

**IV.   The result of hearing God**