



Summer at Woodland Hills

Part 6 – White Noise

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Yesterday, we were getting off the little shuttle from the airport where we parked our car and somebody was standing outside the bus. My wife and I have five kids, so they stood out there and just watched us come off the bus and went, "Whoa! They just keep on coming." I'm like, "Easy there, big guy." I don't know what he means by that, but people say that a lot of times to us when we tell them about our family. They say things like, "Do you know how that happens?" Or they'll say, "Are you Catholic or Mormon or something like that?"

The truth is my wife cannot keep her hands off of me, so that's the real story as to why we have kids. I come home from work and she's like, "Get over here." And I'm like, "Listen, I just want to talk. I am a soul; I am not just a body. I want to connect. I want to know how your doing, what you're feeling." And she's just not having it. She's not here with me this morning; that's why I can say all of that.

Last night was our first night here and we're sleeping in the same room with all of our kids. They are 10, 8, 6, 4, and then we have an 18-month-old. Thank you for your sympathy. I assume that's what that was. It actually went great. I slept great because we sleep with white noise. We sleep with an inordinate amount of white noise. I mean so much that you can hardly hear yourself think and you definitely can't hear anyone breathing or grinding their teeth or talking out loud or any of the things that kids do. Kids sleep so loud. They do everything loud. They eat like beavers. They never stop talking, making so much noise and they sleep like they are awake. I am floored by it. So, we keep the white noise cranked up.

Does anybody else sleep with white noise. Anybody else down with the white noise? What's your flavor; what do you turn up? You just turn music up. I love it. What do you use? The rain. The fan. Very common. The ocean. Now that makes me nervous because one of my greatest fears in life is swimming at night in the dark in the ocean. So, when I hear the waves come in, it just creates fear in me, so I can't do that.

Does anybody else do any outdoor sounds like crickets chirping or frogs croaking or anything like that? Anyone? Anyone? I can't do that because last summer... I guess it was in the spring when the frogs were starting to come out, I was walking out of our house. It was in the morning, it was dark, it was before anybody else had woken up. I open up the door, I step out onto our deck and the frog jumped on me and so, ever since then, me and frogs have had a rivalry that I am not winning, but I'm not for them. So, I can't do that.

We do brown noise. It's actually a frequency. We just turn it up as loud as possible. We love it. Some of you are looking at me like, *What if your kid needed you and you couldn't hear them?* That's the whole point. That's what's great about this. We sleep great. If they do, I don't know, I'm not hearing it, so it's great. We just value our sleep that much.

The reason why I bring this up is because our world... Let me just ask you. Would you say our world has more noise or less noise than ever before? More. There is more noise in our world than ever before. So, I have a message I want to talk about today and I've titled it *White Noise* because I want to use that as a metaphor. White noise is essentially a form of sound masking. This is how white noise works. White noise, when you turn it up, masks all the things that you don't want to hear. If a racoon is getting in your trashcan outside, you don't want to hear that ambient noise because you don't want it to wake you up, right? You want to mask it.

What I've found in life is that white noise masks unwanted sounds, and we all mask unwanted emotions. In fact, I'd love to just ask you this question. What do we use to mask unwanted emotions? There are things inside of us that we feel that we don't want to feel. I've noticed that people turn up noise, people make noise louder in their life because they don't want to feel that stuff.

So, if you would, I'd love to just do some crowd participation. Throw out an answer to what is something that – you don't have to answer for yourself, but answering for a friend – someone uses to mask unwanted emotions? Hallmark movies. Ma'am, I have done this a few times in crowds and I've never gotten that answer, but that is so true. It's kind of an escape from reality, isn't it? You're like, "I don't really like my life, so I'm going to go watch a Hallmark movie where everything is great..." And your husband is covering up his ears, like the whole monkey thing of see no evil, hear no evil... I got it.

Give me another one. Food, shopping. Food is unbelievable. I mean we are more into food today than we have ever been before, right? Some of you have thought about leaving your phone... You know, you've been on a date with your boo, your significant other and you go to a restaurant and you're like, "Why don't you just leave your phone in the car," and it's like, "Well, how am I going to take a picture of my food if I don't have my phone?" We are so into food.

Somebody said something else? Music, social media, work. Yeah, those are all great. You guys are crushing it. You guys get an A+; this is terrific. Social media is amazing because it's like if I didn't have social media, how would I know what everybody else is doing? And if I didn't know what everybody else is doing, how would I feel less about myself, right? So, it's such a great, helpful thing.

Some of you said work. This is a real one because people that are workaholics, we kind of give them a hard time. "Oh, you're working too much. You're a workaholic. You have too much going on." Well, the truth is why do people work too much? Usually people work too much because they don't know what to do at home. Maybe they have a marriage that isn't easy or maybe they're raising kids and it's difficult or maybe they have grandkids or maybe just finances are tough, so we just pour more into work because the work seems easier because we know what to do with it, right? That's the whole point, I think, of why so many people work so much.

Can you give me another one? Alcohol; thank you. We listen to country music in my house. The other day, I caught my four-year-old singing that alcohol you later song. I was like, *Oh gosh, I should probably not do that as a pastor*, but yeah alcohol is certainly one. I was doing this message at our church and it got to be about this point and this whole section started screaming out something. I was like, *What are they screaming?* I said, "What is it again," and they all said, "Wine!" I was like, "Oh wine; yes, absolutely." Wine is something people keep their fingers on, and they turn up the dial when they don't want to feel what's going on.

Somebody give me another one. Shopping is definitely one. It's amazing because you used to have to go somewhere to shop, right? Now, you can just shop from the comfort of your own bed. Your like, *I don't like what I'm feeling, so I'm just going to buy something; I'm just going to shop for something*. What's you've noticed is, as we've been doing this, it's just gotten louder and louder and louder and louder because that's the way the world works. We just keep our fingers on the dial of it and it gets louder and louder. We don't like what we're feeling so we just turn up the volume. You can turn it off. (applause) Isn't that amazing.

What's crazy is... Here's what's true about white noise in our lives. It's always there. Even if you listen right now, it's never perfectly quiet. As humans, we literally can't live in an environment, we can't exist in an environment with no noise. Now you hear the air conditioning or someone coughing. There's always something that we hear, so it's always there. It's imperceptible. Of course, you noticed that noise, but if you were to live long enough with that volume of noise, eventually, you would just grow numb to it. You wouldn't even notice it. It's imperceptible and it's something that often times we control. We control the volume of it. We turn it up louder when we don't want to feel whatever it is that we don't want to feel.

Here's the question that I have for you today. If God wanted to... We're just assuming that God is who he says he is and he's a perfect, loving Father. If he had something inside of you that he wanted to deal with, would you be willing to turn the noise down to let him deal with it? This is the way I view life: You're here today because there's something in you that wants to be a better person. You want to be a better friend. You want to be a better husband or better wife or better grandparent or better child or better kid, or better worker, better employer, better leader. You want more out of life. We all want more out of life.

I believe God has upgrades for us. Just like you call the internet company or the cable company or Sirius radio or whoever and say, "Hey, I'm going to cancel." What do they always say? "Whoa, would you be interested in an upgrade?" You go "Well, okay, maybe." We're all interested in an upgrade. What if God had an upgrade for you and me? Would you be willing to listen? Would you be willing to turn down the noise low enough and long enough to be ruthlessly curious of what he wanted to do inside of you?

That's what I want to talk about today. I want to show you a couple of places where Jesus spoke directly to all this noise in our lives. Where Jesus talked about the consequences of it, what would happen if we would actually pay attention and listen, and what he might want to do if we would be willing to turn it down low enough and long enough.

In his most famous sermon, The Sermon on the Mount, Jesus had a crowd gathered and he spoke on a number of different topics. I want to show you a couple of different verses in The Sermon on the Mount where Jesus talks a little bit about the noise that we're dealing with.

The first one is in Matthew 5. This is in the section that we call the Beatitudes. I love this particular Beatitude. **8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."** What does it mean to be pure in heart? It means you're clean on the inside. You're not cloudy on the inside. You don't have anything diluting it. The water is pure, it's clean, it's filtered, it's paid attention to. He says blessed are those who have a pure heart because they will be able to what? They will be able to see God. That's a beautiful image to me. They'll be able to see God and they may even be able to see like God.

If you could see God, wouldn't you want to know how he feels about your circumstance, about your situation. Maybe you're worried about your finances, worried about your future, worried about your job, concerned about your relationship. And God goes, "Would you be interested in seeing like me? Would you be interested in moving from cloudiness to cleanliness, from water that's diluted to water that's pure. If you would, then you may just be able to see like I see. You'd be able to see me. You may be able to see like I see."

The problem is that we keep our fingers on the dial; we keep turning up the noise, masking what's inside. Here's what I've found: To the degree that we mask our emotions, we remain unable to see God. To the degree that we continue to turn all this up... And there's nothing wrong with all of these. All of these, in some form and some measure and some size, are fine, but the longer we turn them up, the higher the volume gets, the more dependent we become on them, we remain unable to see God. So, it's as if Jesus is saying, "Hey, if you want to experience purity in heart, then you're on the right track because you'll start to see me." So, would you be willing to turn it down low enough and long enough to be ruthlessly curious of what's going on inside of you?

The way that we do that and the way that you would instruct someone. the way you would talk to someone who says, "Well, what do I do? How do I do this?" Well, it's really what all the spiritual disciplines are, right? You're familiar with the spiritual discipline of **fasting**. Fasting is saying, "Hey, I'm going to take off this meal," Or even "I'm going to say no to social media for a month or for a day or for a week." "I'm going to say no to dessert" or "I'm going to say no to sugar," or "I'm going to say no to alcohol," or "I'm going to say no to food for a certain amount of time so I can allow that feeling, that urge inside of me to point me to God." That's the point of fasting.

Or what about **Sabbath**? Are you familiar with the idea of Sabbath? Sabbath is taking a 24-hour period and just not working where you say, "I'm going to rest. I'm going to do what I enjoy doing on this day." Why? It reminds me that life doesn't depend on me. It reminds me that my job is going to be fine without me. But it also reminds me to trust in God. It allows me to turn down the noise so that I can hear what he wants me to hear, feel what he want me to feel, see how he wants me to see.

Another spiritual discipline is **prayer**. Prayer is something we do to go before God, to go with God, to talk to God, to ask him what's going on inside of us. What do I need to be paying attention to? So, in the same sermon, Jesus goes from blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God and then he gives

us the way we see God. He says it happens through prayer. He wants to tell us a little bit about prayer. Prayer is the practice of turning down the noise low enough and long enough to be ruthlessly curious of what's going on inside of us. Here's what he says about prayer:

Matthew 6 - **6** ***"But when you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen."*** Notice the theme. He says if you want to see God, you've got to go pray to the God who is unseen. That's the whole problem with prayer, right? I'm talking to someone who is invisible. I can't see him and that makes it difficult to talk to him and to listen to him. Isn't this the difficult thing about prayer that you go into your room, close the door, and then you pray to your Father who is unseen.

Does anyone else struggle with prayer because of all the distractions in the world? I do. What ends up happening is I end up saying, "God, tomorrow morning, I'm going to pray. I'm going to pray for 60 seconds. I'm going to pray for three minutes, five minutes, ten minutes, thirty minutes." But, naturally, with my mind, which is just always spinning, I get distracted. Here's what ends up happening. I think today, if we read the verse, it would read like this: "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door, get distracted by your phone and end up reading a link about whether or not you should try a reverse mortgage." That's what ends up happening, right? You end up going, "Wait. How did I get here? How did I start thinking about this?" We're so easily distracted because there is so much noise and unfortunately, we keep our fingers on the dial of it.

Here's what Jesus says though and this is beautiful to me. Look at the way he concludes this. He says, ***"...go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen."*** And if you do that, ***"Then your Father, who sees..."*** He sees you. He sees ***"what is done in secret,*** what's done in the solitude, what's done in the silence, what's done when it's just you and him. He sees that and he ***"...will reward you."*** He'll give you a reward. He's got something for you. What's the reward that God wants to give you if you do this? **Peace.** It's what we just sang about. It's what we just read. He wants to give you joy. He wants to let you experience not just fleeting happiness, but joy that transcends your circumstances or your stuff.

What else does he want to give you? **Peace and joy.** Both of them, yeah, I love that. How old are you? He's four. That's a great answer. He's like, "I want them both: peace and joy at the same time. I want the Pop-Tart with the strawberry on the inside and the frosting, plus I want the maple and brown sugar as well. Yeah, both of them; peace and joy."

What else? **Love.** He wants you to experience his love. What else? **Open eyes to see.** He wants to give you the insight, the wisdom, to be able to see your situation the way he wants you to see it. Listen to all of this. He wants to give you peace, joy, love.

He wants to give you **wisdom.** He wants to give you **insight.** Who is the source of all of those? He is. Do you know what the reward really is? It's him. **He is the reward.** It's so easy to look past him at all the stuff he wants he give, but let us not forget that if we would go into the room, close the door, and pray to our Father who is unseen, he would see us and he would give us himself, he'd give us him.

Some of you may be thinking, *Yeah, but don't we have him all the time?* Well, we do have him all the time, but it's like in a great marriage. You know how a great marriage works. You've got the consistency of the everyday, but then what do you have every now and then? You've got the date night, right? Some of you, your spouse has said to you recently, "We need a date night." You say, "Why do we need a date night?" "I just feel like we haven't been together lately." "What are you talking about? We live together; we're together all the time." "No, I want the intentionality of focus. I want you across the table. I want you by my side, paying attention just to me. I want the focus."

Both of those ingredients are what makes a great relationship. It's the consistency of every day, but it's the intentionality of the focus every now and then that creates the spark. It's as if God is saying, "Hey, yes I'm with you all the time, but I want you to go into your room, close the door, and I want you to spend intentional time with me, talking to me, listening to me."

A simple formula I like to use when I'm praying is to just write it out in journal and say, "God, I **want**..." and then fill in the blank. What is it that my soul wants, what is it that my heart wants? "I want to feel freedom from the situation that's tying me down. I want to experience your peace because right now I have a lot of anxiety." I need... After I want, I **need**. I need what? "I need provision. I need you to provide. I need your **wisdom**. I need you to take care of this situation. I need this to stop." And then, "God, I **surrender**." I surrender what? "I surrender my own will. I surrender the way I want it to happen. I surrender my hopes and my dreams, but I'm letting go of this. I'm giving it to you." When we do that, we experience the reward. The reward being him.

What are those emotions inside of you? I want you to just ask... this is a rhetorical question. You don't have to say this out loud. I'm just going to put some up on the board. Here are some things that are really common emotions that people feel that we're constantly masking: **fear** being a big one. The fear of the future. The fear of the relationship ending. The fear of the finances running out.

What about **anxiety**? That worry inside of you that never stops. That low hum of anxiety that runs in the background. Maybe it's the stress of having to provide, having to take care, having to continue to work and make it work.

What about **loneliness**? If you were to get really quiet and turn down the noise, maybe you're afraid. Maybe I would feel that loneliness, so I just keep the television on, I just keep the work happening, I just keep the stuff happening in the background because I don't want to feel it. Let me just ask you, what if God would want to directly deal with this? What would he say? One of the things he would say is, "Hey, I know you feel alone, but I just want to remind you that you are never alone; I'm always with you. And you might feel alone, but I'm here to remind you that you're never alone."

What about this one. This is one that a lot of men feel and maybe women as well, but what about the feeling of **inadequacy**? The feeling that I'm just not enough. The feeling that I don't measure up. What if you turned down the noise and listened to your Father in heaven? What if he directly wanted to deal that? What would he say? He would say, "I love you and you might have failed at work; you might have gotten laid off or fired. That relationship might not have worked. You might not be enough."

A lot of times, I think we think God echoes what the world is telling us. The world is telling to go look in the mirror and tell yourself, "You're good enough, your smart enough, doggone it people like you, you're awesome, you get a reward, you get a certificate, you get a ribbon, you get a trophy," right? I don't know that God would say that.

I think God might go, "Yeah, you're not enough, yeah you have failed, yeah I can understand why you feel like you're a loser, but you're not. Not because you haven't won, not because you haven't succeeded, but because I love you." What do people do to cover up inadequacy? They just buy a bigger boat, house, trophy, get a new spouse, get a bigger truck. There are a lot of things we do to cover it up. And God, I think if he were to speak directly to us, would say, "Hey, I just want you to know that you are loved because you're my son, you're loved because you're my daughter. You might not be enough in anyone else's eyes, but you are enough to me."

Your heavenly Father wants to deal directly with that emotion. You don't have to continue to turn up the noise. You've got a Father in heaven who loves you so much that wants to deal with your emotions before your emotions deal with you. Do you have anybody around you who's emotions are dealing with them, their fear is dealing with them, their anxiety, their stress, their loneliness, their inadequacy is dealing with them?

Let me put it in a different way. Would you deal with your emotional noise before your emotional noise wreaks havoc on others in your life? Do you know that someone, right now, is feeling the implications with you not dealing with your emotional noise? Someone is feeling it right now. Maybe it's a kid, maybe it's a son, a daughter, a parent, a friend, a loved one. Would you choose to deal with it? Turn down the noise low enough and long enough to deal with it.

Let me give you just a simple pathway if you're wanting to say, "Okay, so what should I do?" Here's what I would do if I were you. This is what I'm trying to do in my own life:

1) Choose to identify your white noise. Maybe it is the Hallmark movies. Maybe it's the food or the shopping or the social media or the work or the alcohol. I don't know what it is for you. You know. If you want to know and you can't figure it out, just ask somebody on the ride home today. They'll tell you. They'll be like, "Well, it's probably your phone. Maybe; it might be; I don't know, it's might not be, not a big deal, everything's cool, but it's probably your phone. You're on it right now, it probably is your phone. Love you. I'm for you. I'm here. I'm not going anywhere. But it's probably your phone, maybe." You know how we do. We kind of dance around it like, "No judgment, but if you want me to text you, I can tell you what it is. That way you'd probably read it." Just ask. Choose to identify it.

2) Experiment with it. Don't get crazy and get a flip phone. I said that earlier and somebody came and showed me their flip phone. I thought it was amazing that people still have them. Is there anybody here still rocking the flip phone? Look at that. Right here. This is the greatest generation. This is fantastic. Honestly, there is a lot of wisdom in that. I'm not telling you... Maybe if it's the internet, if it's shopping, don't cut the cord. Don't get rid of the internet. I mean maybe; I don't know. But just go a day without it. Some of you are like, *A day, oh my goodness. To not have WIFI is to not have air conditioning, not have running water.* Maybe, but just maybe try for a meal. Just put your phone down for a meal.

Maybe stop the internet for a day. Maybe get off social media for a week, maybe for a month. Maybe take a day where... Maybe on Thursdays you fast for lunch. I don't know. But would you figure out what your white noise is and then experiment with it? Just see what happens. Turn it down low enough and long enough to be ruthlessly curious of what's going on.

King David did this all the time. If you read through the Psalms, he's constantly going, "Father in heaven, God, search my heart and know me." He says it in Psalm 139. In Psalm 42, he says, "Soul, why are you so downcast within me?" He's talking to himself. Would you just go, "Hey, God, I'm going to experiment with it, I'm going to turn it down low enough and long enough to be ruthlessly curious of what's going on."

3) Be intentional to listen to what it's masking. Just listen to what's there. You might find some fear, you might find some anxiety, some stress, maybe some loneliness, maybe inadequacy, maybe something else. Maybe anger, you might find jealousy, envy. I don't know what you'll find, but everyone around you would feel the benefit of your turning it down low enough and long enough, looking inside at what's really going on. Don't continue to turn it up. Every now and then, decide to turn it down low enough, turn it down long enough to allow God to deal with what's there "for the sake of me, for the sake of my future, for the sake of the world around me, my relationships."

Here's a simple question I want to land on right here. How would God want me, or how would God want to deal directly with this emotion? You've got something inside of you. For some of you, it's scary, honestly, because you think *I don't know what I would do if I had to deal with that. I don't know that I could.*

Here's the good news. You have a Father in heaven that loves you so much that he wants to deal with it with you. He's not the kind of God that says, "Yeah, go figure your anger out and then come back to me." No, we have a God who is the God of the mountains, and he's the God of the valley. He's the God when we're on the beach, when we're at the lake, when we're in the mountains, but he's the God that's also the same God of the wilderness and he loves you so much that he will walk into the mess with you. He'll walk into the pain with you. He's already there. All you have to do is just turn it down low enough and long enough to invite him in to say, "Would you help me process this?"

Some of you can't do it alone. You weren't meant to. This is why there are friends. This is why we're at a church. This is why we gather together because we're in this together. In fact, there are people down front – I love this – that want to help pray with you. It's the beauty of community. People say, "Hey, you don't have to do it alone. I've been there too. I know what that's like. I can help you." But how would your Father in heaven want you to deal directly with it. I'm telling you there's so much freedom on the other side. There's so much freedom on the other side and the great news is, he's on this side and he's on the other side. He's right there with us.

Here's what I would love to do. I'm going to pray for us. And as you bow your head and close your eyes, I would just love to invite you... Would you be willing to raise your hand and say, "Hey, there's something I'm dealing with that I just know I can't deal with alone. I've basked in it for too long."? Would you be willing to just slip your hand in the air? Everybody's eyes are closed. Nobody is looking

around. This is just for me to have an opportunity to pray for you. If that's you, if you'd say, "Yeah, there's something on the inside that I'm dealing with that I can't deal with alone and turning down the noise is scary," would you be willing to raise your hand up?

Heavenly Father, you see these hands. It's amazing that you see; you haven't lost sight of us, we're on your radar. So, for every hand that's in the air, God, I pray that you would give them the courage to turn down the noise, to invite you in, maybe to reach out to someone, maybe to ask someone for help. God, I pray that you would allow them to deal with that emotion that's inside.

Thank you for Jesus' example. God, I love the line that "the pure in heart will get to see God." We want to see you, so I pray for 20/20 vision for every single person here, particularly those with their hands in the air that need to see you. I pray that you give them your perspective, your eyes.

And I pray this week, God, that we would establish that habit of going into the room, closing the door, and praying to our Father who is unseen, so that then our Father who sees us will give us the reward of you. That's what we want, that's what we need. More than anything else, we need you.

We thank you for Jesus, we thank you for your Spirit. We pray all of this in his name... amen.