

Can you hear me, now?

Ready:

“So let God work his will in you. Yell a loud no to the Devil and watch him scamper. Say a quiet yes to God and he'll be there in no time. Quit dabbling in sin. Purify your inner life. Quit playing the field. Hit bottom, and cry your eyes out. The fun and games are over. Get serious, really serious. Get down on your knees before the Master; it's the only way you'll get on your feet.”

-James 4:7-10 (The Message)

Set

It happens all the time, even to the best of them. Athletes reach the goals they have pursued for years, maybe even a lifetime, and then they do it. Maybe they feel they deserve it. They think, “I'm now successful, so I can let up and compromise in a certain area of my life. It's small, and it won't impact me very much.”

The same thing happens to us in our pursuit to grow in Christ. We press into the Lord, and we see transformation occur in our lives. But what starts out pure somehow gets perverted. Pride creeps in. Then the “look how spiritual I am” attitude sets us up for rationalization and compromise. We think we are beyond certain sins, and, even if we did fall, it's not a big deal because we know better. We begin to have these kinds of thoughts:

“If my language becomes a little bit loose, it's all right because God knows that I am a mature believer and that I don't ‘normally’ use that sort of language. I was just joking.”

“If I lose my temper during competition, it's fine because others really know that I don't usually act like that when I play sports, and they understand.”

“I'm so strapped for time this morning, I really don't have time for my devotions. But that's all right, because I already know so much of the Bible. It's become more like ‘review time’ for me these days.”

Any of that sound familiar? You would never say those statements out loud, but maybe you do

whisper them in your heart where no one can overhear them. You begin to lower your guard to other temptations, because you incorrectly believe that you are mature enough to handle what you really cannot. Satan loves it when you think YOU can handle it. He rubs his hands together just waiting for you to walk right into this trap.

My pastor, who baptized me and performed our wedding, thought he could handle it. Innocently enough, he simply stopped believing that it was really necessary for him to keep his windowless office door open when he was meeting with his secretary. After all, they had worked together for 20 years. She was practically family. Following his affair with her, he was able to pinpoint that moment when he made an exception to the door rule as his undoing. His simple exception for himself became an invitation to Satan. One thing led to another, and a horrific price was paid. He lost his family and ministry.

We must draw near to God and His ways instead of taking a break, relaxing, distancing ourselves from the pack or sitting this one out. The day we think we have spiritually arrived is the day we spiritually die. As soon as we begin to feel that we are the exception to the rule, we gain the perception of a fool. We are never above any certain sin.

Little by little, we turn up the volume of our own voice or the volume of the world and turn down that still, small voice of God until it is barely audible. In today's world, it is too easy to turn up the volume. It can become hard to hear God's whisper. One of the greatest signs of true spiritual maturity is the ability to hear God, even to hear His heartbeat.

We know too well the phone commercials with the famous question, "Can you hear me, now?" I usually use that question with God. Too often I find myself saying (or yelling), "Hey God, do You hear me, now? I have been asking You to take care of me and answer my prayers! I don't think You are listening!" Rather, the question needs to come from Him. "Dan, do you hear Me, now? Can you hear My voice with all the noise in your life? Have you heard Me warning you about the decisions you are making?"

When I am tuned into His voice, I don't let up or give out. I'm able to be strong to the finish. And that is my prayer. I desire to finish the race that God has set before me while hearing His small, still voice at all times. Lord, I hear You, now!

Go

1. If you could rate the volume of the world in your life, what would it be? How would you rate the volume of God's voice?
2. What are the things or people in your life that are drowning out the voice of God?
3. Do you ever feel like letting up in your pursuit of Jesus Christ? Why or why not?
4. Are there areas of your life in which you are compromising? Are you hearing the Lord's voice in these situations?

Workout

1 Samuel 3:1-21

Overtime

"Lord Jesus, there are a lot of voices in my life, and I have to confess that they are loud. The materialism voice tells me that I need more things. The competitive voice challenges me to win at all costs. The prideful voice informs me that I am better than others. Lord, I ask that

You remove those voices. I want to hear only Your voice. Yes, I do hear You, now, Lord. I love hearing Your voice, even when I do not agree with it. Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening. In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen.”



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