

Eric Samuel Timm's book, *Static Jedi*, is a refreshing reminder that God is always there ready to meet with us. You will be inspired and encouraged in your own personal pursuit of God. The simple truth is that we need to seek time with Him and life can sometimes get in the way. *Static Jedi* uses practical steps from Jesus's life to radically transform yours.

—MICHAEL W. SMITH  
Singer/songwriter

Balancing six kids, a wonderful marriage, football, speaking, and my spiritual walk is never an easy undertaking. The pace of life can easily take over. In this hustle it's easy to find faith buried in the busy. *Static Jedi* is an excellent playbook for setting up followers of Christ for success in each play of life. Eric's unique and profoundly effective communication style is fully captured in written articulation on the pages of this book. It's creative, entertaining, and packed with profound meaning. Let it challenge you as you get centered. I'm thankful our lives have collided.

—MATT BIRK  
Speaker and author  
All-pro center, Baltimore Ravens Super Bowl XLVII champions

There are so many books today on how to help you manage what EST in this much-awaited book calls the "noise." I appreciate that this book is not about managing the noise but mastering it. Eric artfully explains that it is truly just noise, and once mastered, the reward is far greater.

—CRAIG GROSS  
Founder, xxxchurch.com  
Author, *Open: What Happens When You Get Real,  
Get Honest and Get Accountable*

*Static Jedi* is the challenging reminder that I needed. I now have a renewed excitement to place my priorities in connecting with Christ in a more meaningful and focused manner. Not out of

legalistic obligation but out of a deep desire to know and understand the heart of Christ. Eric's quirky sense of humor and relatable approach made *Static Jedi* an easy yet focused read that I did not want to put down till the final page was turned. Focusing on what matters and mastering the noise should be an aspiration for us all.

—GLENN DRENNEN

Member, award-winning rock band Fireflight

Eric Samuel Timm has used his artistic and communication gifts to transform the lives of millions of adults and students. I have often wondered how one person could be so talented. Now I discover he can also masterfully write. The stories in his first book, *Static Jedi*, are funny, heart grabbing and life changing. I'm jealous! I know it's wrong, but I'm still jealous! I'm also challenged. Read it; you won't put it down.

—KEN DAVIS

Best-selling author, inspirational speaker,  
gifted comedian, master storyteller

God has formed in me a true heart for divine intimacy. Yet I seriously have a big problem mastering the noise. The traveling life of a rock star, along with my cell phone, iPad, and iPhone completely rob me of intimacy with Jesus. *Static Jedi* by EST fell into my lap at the perfect time. This book is an extremely important word for God's people at this moment in history. We need to seriously take this message to heart!

—BRIAN "HEAD" WELCH

Love and Death band, author, speaker,  
and former guitarist for Korn

From the first interaction I had with Eric it was obvious he was one of the most creative and passionate and gifted communicators around. Again this is true with his recent work on *Static Jedi*. In a world full of noise I am thankful that Eric again draws

us back to the clarion voice of God found in His Word. Give us ears to hear.

—J. ROGER DAVIS  
President, Student Life

My friend Eric Samuel Timm has written a book that had me laughing out loud one minute and took me to the face of Jesus the next minute. This book reinvigorated my passion for the “perpetual discovery” of Jesus through giving Him more than just a time of devotion...and learning how to make every moment of my life a time of devotion. I am officially joining the Static Jedi Order.

—KEVIN YOUNG  
Award-winning rock band Disciple

Weird title, awesome book. Quirky author, insightful thinker. Unique style, fresh ideas.

—MARK OESTREICHER  
Partner, The Youth Cartel  
Author

Eric Samuel Timm is a dynamic speaker and has challenged me in several areas of my own spiritual walk. I believe you will be both encouraged and challenged by what Eric says, and if we are willing to step out, God can use those challenges to help us draw closer to Him.

—JON MICAH SUMRALL  
Award-winning rock band Kutless

Inspiration is one of the most powerful driving forces in the world. When Christians become inspired by the words and life of Christ, there is no limit to what God can do in and through them. *Static Jedi* sends an amazing message and challenge to believers to move past the noise and chaos of life into a place

of deeper relationship with God. Read the book. Be encouraged. Most of all, be inspired.

—JEREMY KINGSLEY  
President, One Life Leadership  
Best-selling author, *Inspired People Produce Results*

I remember when the ability to multitask was a leader's pursuit: the more a leader could absorb and decipher, the better. Today's leadership climate demands something much more primal and simpler than that. Our ability to mono-task and hone in on the one voice that brings clarity and creativity amidst all of the noise will set us apart as a spouse, parent, student, or professional. Eric unearths one simple concept that can easily become complicated. He summons us to the profound elementary truth of fixing our eyes on the One who speaks, for it is here that we find all we need. This timely response and proactive approach is a gift to us all.

—HEATH ADAMSON  
National youth director, Assemblies of God

Intimacy with God is mastering the spiritual discipline of creating sacred space that is mobile. This is to cultivate community and harmony with the triune God not only when you sit but also when you move in the flow of life. *Static Jedi* is more than a resource on spiritual intimacy; this is a paradigm changer that will hydrate your soul unto spiritual renewal. Mastering the noise of the chaos of life is not only crucial but also life giving. Eric Samuel Timm is a minister to ministers, and these precepts are not only preached but also practiced in humility and servitude. I highly encourage you to read, glean, and position your heart to fight for godliness.

—DR. ED NEWTON  
Bible communicator, Memphis, TN

Eric is one of the most creative people I know. Many have seen his masterful storytelling on the painted canvas. In *Static Jedi* Eric takes on a canvas—the written page—in order to sketch a portrait of a disciple of Jesus living today in a fresh and compelling way.

—SHANE STACEY

National director, ReachStudents  
Evangelical Free Church of America

Any church would benefit from experiencing this book together. If you have ever found yourself overwhelmed, disconnected from God, and wading through the static of your day, you need to read this book. Eric expertly navigates this hard-to-master skill and lays out an easy road map that anyone can follow. After all, he takes his cues from Jesus's example in Scripture—what better model than that?

—ROB KETTERLING

Lead pastor, River Valley Church

In *Static Jedi* Eric tackles the issue of our noisy, distracted lives in a fresh and creative way...and if you know Eric, you know that's the only way he's going to address anything! Eric thinks differently, lives differently, and writes differently, which is why I'm constantly drawn to what he has to say. This book speaks with a broad brush that challenged me personally. I know it will challenge my students as well.

—KURT JOHNSTON

Pastor to students, Saddleback Church

*Static Jedi* is a timely book that challenges believers to move beyond the noise of this life to a place of unparalleled faith and closeness with God. It attacks, without defeat, mediocrity and complacency, the silent killers in the pursuit of God. The book,

in a very practical way, draws you where you need to go in your faith. Let it move you, challenge you, and change you!

—CLAYTON KING  
Speaker and author  
Campus pastor, Liberty University  
Founder, Crossroads Worldwide

With a direct word from the Lord for this time, Eric jabs into the heart of what has potential to steal our hearts and offers practical knowledge as well as theory and mind-set for beginners and veterans of following Christ alike. An important tool for an important time in our spiritual history.

—DAVE DECKER JR.  
Pastor to creatives  
Founder, LightsOut

Eric Samuel Timm masters the pen as well as the artist paintbrush. He is not just a hearer of the Word but also a doer of the Word. His latest body of work portrays his passion for the kingdom in the only way he can—by creating vivid landscapes of thought and reflection, challenge and action, humility and faith. There is something in *Static Jedi* for every reader who desires to find purpose and meaning out of life and to courageously navigate their way to the waiting, outstretched arms of Jesus. A must-read for the master in all of us. It's time to cut through the noise and get real with God.

—BLAKE SILVERSTROM  
Director, OneHope

Eric has captured the essence of a passion and commitment to Christ. In *Static Jedi* you'll be inspired and encouraged to further your pursuit of God, to deepen your commitment to Christ, and to make Christ known in a "noisy" world full of distractions.

The real-life application in each chapter will compel you to think internally as well as externally.

—JEFF PIEPER  
Alliance director, Luis Palau Association

Eric Samuel Timm's *Static Jedi* is an inspiration not only to simplify one's life but also to make more of the time we are given. It is a guide on how to bridle life's noise and use it for a greater purpose rather than be overwhelmed by it. As a musician and artist, it reminds me that to be who I really was created to be, I must be still and listen to the Creator. Out of that comes God's vision for my creativity—God's songs for my life of worship. My prayer is to quiet my noise to hear God's clarity.

—JACOB OLDS  
Member, award-winning rock band Family Force 5

From his heart as an artist, Eric Samuel Timm uses a pen this time instead of a brush! He has painted in words a pointed challenge of the noise, craziness, and busyness in our lives. He uses some deep colors to convict and call us to more, or is it to less? It's both. Less noise. More stillness.

—BOB LENZ  
Life Promotions  
International speaker and author

Eric sheds so much light on the dark situation we all have put ourselves into that it hurts, and I'm glad it hurts. A broken generation needs tools provided in *Static Jedi* to even realize how broken we are. His creative insight into finding true emotional and spiritual balance is a must "read and do book" for all of us!

—SCOTT BRINSON  
Founder, My Broken Palace

I've known EST for nearly ten years for his brilliant brush strokes on blank canvases. In *Static Jedi* he has painted a masterpiece for

this generation with his words. Every Christian should be armed with the truths and wisdom Eric has packed in this book. Turn off the noise and start reading now!

—TERRY WEAVER  
Speaker and author, *Making Elephants Fly*  
Editor, “Capture”

I would especially recommend this book for couples and families who are crippled by busyness. Read it together to recenter, refocus, and reengage with God and each other! Eric’s healthy, tell-it-like-it-is approach is fun, meaningful, and spiritually practical.

—AARON GONYOU  
Director, marketing and communications  
Compassion Canada

Eric Samuel Timm is the most creative communicator I know. He is a deep well in the Word who is inspiring and challenging. *Static Jedi* is a must-read. I dare you!

—RANDY YOUNG  
Relations manager to artists, speakers, and events  
World Vision Canada

When I meet Eric, I was riveted by his creativity as well as his clarity in presenting a life-changing message that informed as well as educated the listener. In *Static Jedi* Eric again communicates timeless truth in a way that engages the reader as well as challenges common opinion. Eric has nailed, in a creative way, the passion of the lost. This is a must-read.

—JOHN MAY  
District youth director, Potomac Youth Network

Eric’s writing style captures you immediately, and the revelation God drops through him in this book is revelatory. The book was

so convicting, it sparked kitchen table conversation and tears while I read it.

—JORGE AND KAT VAZQUEZ  
*The Revolution TV*

Eric Samuel Timm is one of the most creative people I have ever met. On and off the stage he wows people with his wit, humor, and artistry. In *Static Jedi* once again he doesn't fail to bring us to the edge of our seats and show us a new horizon over cliffs we could not previously see, into the art that is God Himself. While he teaches you to be a static Jedi and master the noise of your life in this book, you feel you are in a different sound wave all together.

—MATT BROWN  
Evangelist and author  
Founder, Think Eternity

Eric has demonstrated time and again his ability to hear from God, then clearly communicate a relevant and timely message. His passion and unique style have made him a favorite of both students and leaders. The message of *Static Jedi* will both challenge and equip each reader to overcome the noise that holds them back from their potential. You will be challenged to live at a place you've not yet reached.

—MARK DEAN  
Director, Minnesota Youth Ministries

Pushing gravity and testing limits, life is an awesome adventure! Experiencing life to the full is what Jesus offers. *Static Jedi* challenges you to get more than you ever thought you could out of your relationship with Jesus by taking your faith past the point it is today. Live life in rarefied air. Read the book and begin the truest adventure!

—MARIO D'ORTENZIO  
Founder/director, Death 2 Life Revolution

Eric Samuel Timm is one of the most talented and creative people I know, and he uses unique communication skills to effectively identify the many distractions that will drown out the life-giving voice of God. This book will renew one's desire to hear the Lord's voice while offering practical solutions to illuminate the distractions that lure us away daily.

—RICHARD CRISCO  
President, Empowering Kingdom Leaders  
International speaker and author  
Pastor, Rochester First Assembly, Michigan

Every chapter produces fruit on this subject and has one take-away statement/illustration that has to be highlighted, journaled, tweeted, or retold in person. A good book contains scriptures. A great book points you back to discover even more in the Scriptures. *Static Jedi* is that kind of book; EST is that kind of author.

—JONNY MAC  
Pastor of students, Southeast Christian Church  
Louisville, Kentucky

Eric Samuel Timm isn't only one of the funniest and most creative human beings I know, but he has also written works that speak to the soul in his book, *Static Jedi*. My life is surrounded by noise, and often I miss the message God is trying to relay because of the noise. I appreciate this book, and I look forward to the response the world has when they read these words.

—MATT BAIRD  
Lead singer award-winning rock band Spoken

*Static Jedi* is a must-read for all who are serious about living a life of true peace. The words are Eric's paint, every sentence is filled with gripping color. He has turned his pen into a brush and the pages into canvas. Read it only if you want to be moved to change the volume of God's love in your life.

—SAM FARNIA  
Evangelist, author, pastor

I'm impressed with Eric's genuine call and artistic approach to sharing the gospel of Jesus outside of this book. However, inside this book Eric encourages you to not live in the static of life. Instead he challenges you to make every moment count and follow Jesus with total abandon to self. It will also make you smile a lot and write out witty quotes on Facebook.

—TIM BYRNE  
Pro skateboarder, evangelist

I'm so glad Eric is addressing this issue of noise and distraction in our culture today. It is the battle of our generation. In *Static Jedi* I believe you will find practical and helpful advice on how to follow and pursue Jesus in the midst of changing crazy times.

—KRISTIAN STANDFILL  
Award-winning recording artist

Read *Static Jedi* and you'll experience Eric Samuel Timm dropping some Jesus power on you, Obi-Wan Kenobi style! But the force you'll get isn't fictional; it's authentic Holy Spirit power helping you master the noisy gauntlet of life choices. Read this book!

—TONY NOLAN  
Gospel preacher, @tonynolanlive

Eric Samuel Timm is a master. He takes the heart of the ancient spiritual masters and their understanding of spiritual disciplines and translates them into the modern world without losing anything in that transition. Deep spirituality is gained at a great price. The ancients knew this, and the modern world needs to know it as well. Eric accomplishes this marvelous task with artistry and depth and engages the reader while telling this timeless story.

—DR. GORDON ANDERSON  
President, North Central University, Minneapolis, MN

Over twelve years of criss-crossing with Eric across the nation, I've learned there is no substitute for my time with Jesus. In *Static Jedi* my good friend Eric Samuel Timm invites you and me to reset, turn down the volume, and experience the supernatural. Jesus is calling—let's go.

—NICK HALL  
Evangelist, Pulse Founder

I've known Eric for many years now and have toured with him all over the country! He has to be one of my favorite people to be around: one, because of his genuine love for God, and two, because of his hunger and thirst to see this generation changed. I can't wait to see the impact this book will have on many young people!

—LEELAND MOORING  
Recording artist, Leeland

*Static Jedi*—humorous, heartfelt, and very helpful! Eric in his own unique style of writing will challenge and inspire you to step back and prioritize your relationship with God. I can tell you that he lives out the words written on these pages, and after reading this book, you'll be living them out too.

—MIKE LOVE  
Executive director, YC and Extreme Dream Ministries



STATIC

JEDI™

ERIC SAMUEL TIMM

PASSIO

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To all those who have given grace when I failed.

To those believing and acting upon what  
Jesus wants to do through my hands.

To my entire family. Lose battles but win the war  
for love together. I fight for you with arms laid  
down. May your muskets forever lay as well.

To X and Z. May you always be strong new houses for the  
King that defend mankind. I'm proud of you and who you  
are yet to become. Awake. Love. Think, and then speak.

To my window, my compass, my anchor securing  
deeply. Your reflective radiance confirms what  
I always knew. The only real color is you.

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## FOREWORD

**W**HAT IS NOISE?  
Maybe a better question, what is “white light?”

If you have ever gone through a school lesson on what makes white light, you remember seeing a rainbow refracted through a piece of triangle-shaped glass from a single light source. White light is made up of all the colors, and each is seen when slowed down long enough for the frequencies of light to be displayed. This happens usually in form of the entire rainbow cascaded into a component of colors.

In the same way white noise is constructed of many frequencies. From the science of light is where we get the term *white noise*, because it shares similar properties. White noise is a combination of different frequencies. In fact, perfect white noise would be defined to the human as all the imaginable tones that a human ear can hear. It’s why it works so well. Your brain can easily hear one person speaking but continue adding voices, and eventually we can’t pick out anyone; it all becomes noise.

We are living in a time where the hearing from God is bombarded by many frequencies and voices. This noise, corrosive in nature, makes it difficult to hear God’s voice...living with more noise means we live less like a disciple.

We need a prism.

Eric Samuel Timm is a prism.

A remarkable artful communicator of God’s truth who personally is mastering the medium, he challenges you to see, hear, and then do. In the pages ahead Eric illuminates what has been there all along...to see the frequencies, hear from God, and live more like a disciple.

God is using him to help me see what was there but not so easily apparent until revealed in a moment.

This book you're holding is also prism.

This book cuts the noise.

This is your moment, to hear, see, and do.

Mary had a moment of revelation. Simple yet so profound. Imagine Mary after Jesus was crucified. All the thoughts raging inside her head and heart. The noise of the circumstance, of the Roman soldiers, the trial days earlier, and even the judge internally in her own heart. Then something cuts through it all. Her name is spoken by her Rabbi, Jesus. The light becomes color . . . the white noise becomes a singular voice.

What was true then can be true for you. Let the noise print of the world, circumstance, and settings fade. Hear His voice print over the sound compounding.

The rise of the kingdom of noise over your life doesn't have to conquer your life. There are many kingdoms but only one kingdom.

One little "k" Eric so timely addresses in the pages ahead is the kingdom of noise. So in closing collectively, as members of the same body, allow this book to help build the same kingdom to better serve the King. I encourage you to read it, walk your church through it, and share with the ones in your community to strengthen your community.

Be a master of the noise and live life in full color. In abundance, as Jesus so clearly states in John 10:10, "I have come to give you life full!"

See what you have never seen. Hear what you have been missing. Live how you have never lived.

—MARK BATTERSON

*New York Times* best-selling author, *The Circle Maker*

## PREFACE

Noise.

It's everywhere.

Daily we are bathed in distractions. The noise  
intensifies, weaving strings  
around and through us  
until we are dancing under these powerful  
puppeteers.

These cords that can be broken, pull and tug, while we  
live a pseudo sense of control.

Daily surmounting, the noise is getting louder. We  
discover  
new noise,  
new sound.

Rather than protecting the ears of our hearts, we are  
drawn in each day like the fading  
tides that dance daily with the moon. The noise  
becomes a deep part of our everyday  
cycle, our now  
hurried lives.

Once immersed in the noise, we struggle to hear clearly.

In my travels, I am often asked,  
“Who am I supposed to be?”  
“What is God’s will?”  
“When do I know?”  
“Where was God?”  
“Why can’t I hear God?”  
“How can I ever move  
beyond my past,  
on,  
forward?”

In this noise we decide, direct, dictate, and die.

At one time, the noise did not so easily roam.  
Connected was a horse to a cart.

Clarity was vital to life.  
In any generation there was—  
is—  
a deep need for clarity,

Not circumstantial to surroundings, cycles, events, or  
trends.

Continually bathed in noise, we begin to unravel.  
Life is a dangerous place to stupor about when you are  
a slave to the noise, stripped of  
the ability to hear clearly. Your daily ritual baths  
have left you feeling anything but  
clean. In the mire of noise your questions are  
breeding and birthing more questions,

Which remain unanswered.

Such offspring are like fruit,  
spawned from the tree of noise,  
not born of the tree of life.

Often God speaks life in the stillness, apart from the  
noise. When Elijah needed to hear,  
God sent  
a strong wind,  
an earthquake,  
and a fire.

God wasn't in the wind, in the quake, or the fire.  
He whispered in the stillness.

Noise hides this stillness,  
clouds direction,  
breeds pain,  
doubt,  
fear,  
confusion.

Our core cries out for God to answer, to speak.

## STATIC JEDI

Maybe God has already said what we wish Him to say.  
I wonder if it's frustrating for  
God to see us holding His Word while we ask for  
answers He already gave.  
Are we asking for directions with the map in our  
hands?  
With different characters but the same plot, sometimes  
our story has already unfolded.  
It's just trapped in the pages of ink and paper.  
God is waiting  
in His Word.  
Our hunger for His Word must outweigh the very  
thing that weighs us:  
The noise.  
Our life must contain clarity where we decide, direct,  
dictate,  
and live.  
The noise must become a slave.  
Once mastered, it is a useful tool.  
To position your life differently, reverse your actions.  
This will change you.  
Your life's cyclical tides will dance  
not with the moon  
but with the Son.  
Do the natural. He does the super.  
Embrace your freedom!  
Live a life of clarity.  
Become like the Master.  
Master your noise.  
Master the static.  
Become a Static Jedi.



Static Jedi: One who masters the noise. Noise, existing in many shapes, consumes our time, real life, and ability to hear God. A Jedi is a form of master, teacher, and sensei.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A BIBLICAL SAGE ONCE scribed, “There is nothing new under the sun.”

In these same truthful words I would say this book is not my own.

It is not so much that I have written this book but transcribed this from the many people who have first inscribed these pages upon my heart.

Their effort validates their extensive writing as their cramping hand reminds them of who they are. I give back your text in form of this book.

For the writers upon my heart have been more than just scribes to me. So yes, there is nothing new under the sun.

However, through the Son, as a son, all things are new.

Within a desk drawer or unearthed from within the deep mines of myself are all new when illumined by a father or mother.

I acknowledge my fathers and mothers.

Thanks for being dads and moms.

The kind that have changed history, mine.

## INTRODUCTION OF A PERSPECTIVE

I CANNOT EXPLAIN THE arrival of the words I've penned in the pages that lie ahead in your field of view. Only by God's grace and the faith to strike the keyboard with the fingers He made upon my own hands has this book come about.

By grace through faith.

Grace from what Jesus provides.

Faith from my response in this provision.

This is the perspective.

The pages ahead can easily be read from a different view.

The words penned are not found rooted in what we have to do or are to earn.

Jesus has completed and paid what we cannot.

The journey to master the noise, becoming a Static Jedi, is not a *have* to, but a *get* to.

It's a choice you get to make, as it is so with love, faith, and hope.

The purpose of a motivational book is to get you going.

The end game of a self-help book is to get you to change.

The prize of an inspirational book is to get you to feel better.

The goal of this book is worship.

Journey to be found before God alone, reeking of worship, not of the noise,

as a master of it—

a Static Jedi.

So take a journey with me through these pages.

## STATIC **JEDI**

I only offer the same path I myself have walked.

The path Jesus walked as well.

Not from a haughty assumption and my own spiritual trophy case, but a conviction found in God's Word and the way the Word lived.

I can't guarantee that you finish the book, but I can safely say that if you do, you will feel as I felt when

I completed it,

Changed.

Challenged.

Equipped.

This path I speak of from noise to stillness,

from passive to pursuit,

knowing about to knowing Jesus is not only mine to personalize and travel.

That being said, I have offered a road post at the end of each chapter.

Questions.

Questions that you can ask yourself, internally (internal inquiry) or within a group setting, externally (external inquiry).

These will help guide you and make the pages I personalized to myself and my story come alive to then be personalized to you.

The person you can become will not recognize the person you are now.

Read on to not finish but to change.

## Chapter 1

# ARE YOU A STATIC JEDI?



**E**VERYONE MOVES AT some point in life. To an apartment, house, college, or hut. We are transient creatures.

I remember moving when I was a kid. A family relocation means a new place, new schools, and lots of unknowns. I was fine with those. What I didn't like about moving was the packing. I had to pack, haul, and then unpack. I didn't like having my room torn apart or having to reset everything as it was.

I have never met anyone who likes the ancient ritual of moving. When my cousin recently told me he was moving, he said it with that special "This is really going to stink" tone in his voice. Moving is work, and it's emotionally, physically, and financially draining. Going to a new address requires time and money, and once you've moved in, you have to hunt for the television remote and the pizza cutter. They are probably in the same box. After our last move the cutter was nowhere to be found, so I used my wife's scrapbook scissors with the zigzag edge to slice a frozen pizza. My favorite thin crust never had such beautiful lacy edges.

In our recent move things were lost, one after another, into the black hole of the moving space continuum. For weeks I couldn't find critical proprietary pieces for a shelf unit. The shelves wouldn't go together, and one of the missing pieces is probably only found on a remote island near Sweden, so I couldn't dash to the local hardware for replacement parts. But then, during the

final walk through of our old house, like a retired beach bum I raked my son's backyard sandbox and found the missing piece. If you wonder where something is, check the sandbox. It's rule number 346 of parenting. Rule number 347 is buy a new pizza cutter.

On moving day I stacked boxes containing my earthly belongings into the truck. One box on top of another, I built a huge cardboard wall. Soon the belongings—the pizza cutter, the incomplete shelving unit, and my turbo nose trimmer—stacked behind the wall were no longer visible.

I think our lives can become a lot like that cardboard barrier.

## **Build a Wall**

Think about your average week. Consider your daily routine, specifically how you invest your time. More specifically focus on your level of noise—those tasks you know don't really matter. The urgent and not-so-urgent that pull you from the important. This noise would be those things that distract us, not including work, school, sleep, or our daily commute. We'll look at the overarching installments of each day as we continue on, but for now let's focus on the noise.

How many hours do you invest every day ingesting your noise? Total the investment of your time in hours from all the different sources of noise in your life. What would your noise number be?

For me I've had to ask how many hours in a day, collectively, I'm on the Internet—clicking, checking, swiping, updating, posting. How much time do I invest watching television and movies, searching YouTube for a laugh, or playing video games? Where am I choosing to entrap myself in endless conversations scribed one text line at a time? How many hours, collectively, am I glued to a screen? With my phone in hand, bending my gaze toward my Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts takes minutes at a time, but when the reality is compounded, it takes up much more, maybe even hours.

This could include non-digital forms of distraction too, such as newspapers, magazines, board games, and romance novels. (No, I'm usually not caught reading romance novels; however, you may be. Your noise currents may be different from mine. Different generations and different people have different noises, but all of it is still noise.) Make a note of the hours you invest in noise each day. Write this note in this book (if you are reading a hard copy), your journal, a napkin, or your digital notepad.

For this example let's say you honestly invest two hours each day immersed in your noise. Maybe it's way more for you. Maybe it's less. Whatever the case, be honest with your number and generous in your definition of noise. I say to be generous with your definition because sometimes we rationalize the noise until we're convinced what we're doing and hearing is actually building substance into our lives. I see this concept most prevalent in the current landscape of social media. We justify our actions and interactions with noise as educational or relationally productive.

Is it? How do you know? How can you be sure?

Now let's take that daily number in our example of two hours per day and multiply it by seven days in a week. Two hours each day in the noise x seven days a week = fourteen hours invested each week in the noise.

Let those fourteen hours be represented by fourteen cardboard boxes. Every hour in the noise is represented by one box.

If your daily noise number is one, then you would have seven boxes here. If your number of noise hours is three, you would have twenty-one boxes.

For our example now we're going to multiply fourteen boxes per week by the average number of four weeks in a month. This is simple mathematics. I'm not trying to do quantum physics, account for a leap year, or figure the gravitational pull of the earth during the winter solstice of the southeastern hemisphere. If you have your calculator app or old-school TI-85 calculator

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with you, put it away. There will be no graphs. Or you can draw one if it makes you feel better.

At just 2 hours per day invested in noise, our 14 hours each week multiplied by 4 weeks in an average month equals 56 hours per month. In a month we have built a wall consisting of fifty-six cardboard boxes. In a year that number grows to 730 hours, being that there are 365 days in a year. If you divide 730 by 24, it equals about 30 days—meaning that approximately 1 whole month out of each year of our life is invested in noise. What if that math is applied to 10 years of your life? The result from that application can be startling.

It's a slippery slope, and we slide it blindly. Sliding down further than we realize at just two hours a day invested in the noise.

In one decade we fall just shy of losing an entire year to the noise—at only two hours a day.

That's almost 10 percent of your life spent investing in the noise.

We are often unaware of the gradual decline and the erosion our lives but not unaware of the gnawing feeling it brings.

If you feel that gnawing, that pull within you to focus on what really matters, that call within to live differently, then you are becoming aware of this and are no longer blind to it.

Without awareness change is difficult.

If you don't adjust the math, then every ten years you live your life, you will have lost about one of them—to the noise.

A year of your life: that's watching the screen for one year. That's twelve months you failed to live.

You merely existed. Like a banana slug. Which are yellow and have one lung. Wild West yellow too—not a color you want to be labeled.

Breathing in, exhaling out.

A half-life.

Turn twenty years old at this rate of investment in the noise and that's two years of your life lost searching YouTube for

treasure. The treasure chest was empty, a pointless quest the reward. At forty years old, the traditional midpoint celebration of life, about 10 percent or so of your life will be gone to the noise at just two hours a day invested in it.

Your child turns ten years old, but to you, he or she is still nine because you missed a year. Almost twelve months of not being face-to-face in relationship with your kids.

Instead, you were screen to face.

They were in the other room.

This may not apply directly to you if you're not a parent. However, if you are as I am, you may be haunted by the number of hours you spend together with your kids. The time you spend so easily decreases when you factor in hours of school, church, music lessons, and a couple summer camps. Children are only children for a brief number of years, and that goes by too fast. For some the rate of responsibility is even faster as kids are pushed into adulthood in our society of the fatherless. It doesn't have to be this way. The amount of noise in our life potentially steals an additional two years away from what has been said to be the cornerstone of culture and successful communities: the family.

But back to our wall, which is another rising cornerstone of culture, the noise.

## Wall of Noise

In one month we have fifty-six cardboard boxes that each represent an hour of noise. To build our wall, let's put seven boxes in a row and stack another row of seven on top of those seven. Eventually we have a wall that is seven boxes wide and eight boxes tall. The wall of noise.

Walls keep things out.

Walls keep things in.

We hide stuff behind our walls.

Walls have gone up, come down, and remained strong throughout the history of the world—the Great Wall of China,

the Berlin Wall, the walls of a city called Jericho, the walls of our hearts—to name a few.

The Bible tells us that huge walls surrounded Jericho. Some archeological evidence argues there were actually two walls and that Jericho stood on a hill. At the base of the hill would have been a stone retaining wall that rose twelve to fifteen feet high. Built upon that retaining wall was possibly a mud brick wall some six feet thick and twenty-six feet tall. At the top of this hill, where Jericho perched, was a second mud brick wall.<sup>1</sup>

Both sides of any historical/archeological debate can agree Jericho was an impressive structure for its time. Possibly towering fifty feet into the sky, the Jericho fortifications must have appeared intimidating as the Israelites marched around the walled structure—I know they would have for me if I had only a handmade spear in hand.

The story in the Bible ends with the walls coming down.

## **Do the Math**

Let's begin to tear down our walls of noise.

Standing in front of our example of fifty-six boxes, we can remove them one at a time—but how we do this will be a special process. Just as we thought about our average week and how we invest time ingesting noise, let's do that again now, only from a different angle.

Instead of focusing on noise, now concentrate on the time you invest in clarity. This is time devoted to things that change us, grow us, and draw us to become more like Christ. Moments when the sands of the hourglass do not slip through our fingers, but when we instead grab hold of every precious grain. These are the occasions spent with Jesus and the moments that really matter.

It's this communing with clarity that moves us toward becoming a Static Jedi.

One who masters the noise.

If you placed a number on how many hours each day you

invest in clarity, what would that number be? How frequently do you remove yourself from the noise? How much time do you spend in meaningful conversation, breaking bread, engaging face-to-face with your family, or fasting in private? How many hours or minutes in a day, collectively, are you praying, seeking, reading, or memorizing the Word? How much time do you invest in bringing the balance back to where God's voice is the loudest or withdrawing to the stillness of the morning? Do you, even in the chaos of the day as you're stuck in traffic or baptized in the hustle of life, find ways to continue to focus on acknowledging the presence of God?

As you are at this moment, what would you say? How much time do you invest in clarity?

## Clarity Defined

We live in a busy time. Always moving, perpetually in motion—tasks, distractions. We are so adequately named the human *race*. Always running. *Human race* is a spiritual classification and condition, far more than just a sociological label.

In an age where time just speeds by, we can easily, carelessly, and foolishly squander it. But here's the thing. No one can retrieve time already squandered. Each day our twenty-four-hour allotment is typically invested in rushing around with tasks, school, homework, cleaning, kids, sleep, and our jobs. I've had mornings when the first thing I do after waking up is grab my handheld digital noisemaker and check statuses and e-mail and then fight fires—putting out urgent and unimportant matters with my limited life's energy and my finite twenty-four-hour allotment. It's like a cosmic eight ball that I can't get out from behind, and then the cycle repeats. There are days when my breath seems like something I can never catch, and enough is never enough. Then I end days like this by turning on the fan or a digital noisemaker to sleep.

We need the noise to sleep, to rest.

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The silence has a foreign nature to it.

It's too quiet.

It's uncomfortable.

It's out of place,

out of pace,

with our lives.

We've all felt this way, and if we're honest, these days turn into weeks, then months, then years. This habitual way of living creeps into the chambers of our hearts and diverts and dictates our life-giving flow. Unless we are purposeful and watchful regarding our daily moments, all those precious minutes are ruthlessly stolen by the noise.

Except on Sunday.

Sunday is always the Sabbath at home, right?

Nope.

Too often Sunday becomes the catch-up-and-prepare day—catch up the loose ends left over from the week before and prepare for the onslaught that's coming in the week ahead. It's nothing like a Sabbath day, remembered and set apart. So how much time would you put down in pursuit of God and clarity?



**Clarity is silently and stealthy exchanged for noise. #staticjedi @ericamueltimm**

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Every time I ask this question when I'm speaking and painting at churches, conferences of young people, or with leaders in ministry, it gets really quiet. The silence and personal stories reflected from the audience tell me that sometimes the Bible is not even opened in a given week. Christ followers are more apt to rake over a quick devotional than shovel and dig into God's Word by wrestling, studying, and memorizing it. I'm not looking for spiritual trophy-case displays here, but it burdens my heart as I meet followers of Christ who can quote copious amounts of

movie dialogue and music lyrics but can't give me five verses by heart from God's Word.

Even for a hundred bucks. (Some of you were there when I tried this at camp one time. I still have the hundred-dollar bill in my office!)

The Word and prayer dwindle to something dashed off perfunctorily before we eat or go to sleep—if then. Church becomes a social club or a box on the to-do list that we check off for the week. Discipling others gets lost in the shuffle of life, as we have left the path long ago of being disciples ourselves. The only thing we are caught withdrawing to is anything that keeps us from withdrawing from our toxic addiction to noise. For many, it isn't an illegal substance we fear withdrawal from. It's that spiritually toxic addiction to the static, to the noise. It's easy to stay hooked in our full world. We despise the morning and don't ever have to really feel hunger pangs.

Clarity is silently and stealthily exchanged for noise.

In fact, countless devotionals and study Bibles are based on the concept of getting our clarity in two minutes or less. This trains us to think there is "time with God" and "our time." The compartmentalization of His voice to set times we commune with Him is a dangerous place to live. Is it our goal to spend the slightest amount of time possible with the Lord and still be in relationship with Him? I'm not discounting the effectiveness of these publications or their place in our lives at certain times, but their very existence validates a system that tries to battle the noise with the least amount of commitment—just like a specific type of soda in your grocery store indicates a precise kind of beverage-drinker guzzling down that exact flavor of food coloring or aspartame. (What exactly is caramel color, anyway?)

Noise is battled fifteen, ten, and five minutes at a time.

But do you think it's working?

As the body of Christ, are we winning this struggle?

Has it worked for you?

Are you still a servant—or, more truthfully, slave—to the noise? I'll let you decide.

Continually packaging God's Word in compact and easy-to-use ways will continue to produce compact and easy-to-use followers of Christ—who possibly have compact dreams and easy visions.

## **Devotionals and Shaving**

That's why I think some devotionals are like shavers. Manufacturers started out with one blade; then they added two blades. Later they determined we need two blades and a lotion strip. OK, wait—three blades, a gel strip, and an AAA battery with a heater and automatic lotion dispenser with a tanning application. Then a fourth blade for that really close shave, and by the way, it's got an MP3 player with a thumb drive in the base, and it runs on both operating systems. And it has to be pink.

Or red.

The overarching marketing message here is the need to make it faster and easier with the least amount of effort for the consumer.

Workout videos are the same way. Eight-minute abs, five-minute abs, two-minute abs, one-minute abs, and then buy the electric belt and it works it out for you with electrostimulation.

Like automatic sit-ups without the *up*.

Just the sit.

Just sit and enjoy your popcorn—the *up* is taken care of.

This easy, quick, convenient mentality has compartmentalized our walk with the Lord. The one-minute Bible and quick devotions are aimed at us. What are we teaching about time spent with God?

What's next—the thirty-second study Bible?

Maybe we should just make Christianity microwaveable. Something like Microwaveable Christianity Hot Pockets.

Or maybe God would like us to show up once in a while without it being fast and easy.

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it.”

—MARK 8:34–35

Maybe the life Jesus is talking about here is our social life—that rapidly expanding, partly cyber, private-yet-public social life.

But maybe He just means our life, which raises a few questions:

What is our life?

What makes up our life?

What is the life Jesus is talking about here?

The breath that enters our lungs?

The house we live in or the pursuit of the one we wish to own?

Our math class?

The political party we belong to?

Our opinions?

Our experiences?

I say all of it.

The word *life* in Mark 8:34–35 is the Greek word *psychē*.<sup>2</sup> It is a powerful, colorful word that means “breath” or “the vital forces which animates the body and shows itself in breathing.” When we see the breath leave a body, it then stops the perpetual motion of breathing. We then understand this as life having left their lungs. *Psychē* also refers to “the seat of feelings, desires, affections... (our heart, soul, etc.)”

So the better question may be, what feelings, desires, or affections in our lives are seated where they shouldn’t be?

The noise.

Since we are all body, soul, and spirit (1 Thess. 5:23), we all have the same basic moving parts to us. In Christ the spirit is made new and is connected to the Spirit of God. Our bodies are simply our shells, the package for the spirit and the soul.

But the soul is the battleground.

The noise is focused on eroding the soul.

We store much in the soul. The soul is where we remember. The soul is where we remind ourselves what was, not always what the Spirit of God says is.

Like a flash drive or hard disk in a computer, we record our lives, will, experiences, opinions, and emotions—all within our souls. Thoughts, feelings, personalities, and dreams...it's no wonder there is a struggle within us to get the soul to continue to align with the spirit. What the spirit wants must overcome what we want so the mind and then the body can follow.

It's a struggle for the throne of hearts, for the seat of our minds.

The noise constantly wants that seat.

To be on that throne.

This sacred throne of our soul is what the enemy seeks to occupy. So maybe the life Jesus is saying we should be laying down is a life that involves anything that is seated where He should be.

This could be an exhaustive list of things such as our past or future, callings, dreams, money, kids, time, talents, Facebook, opinions, and anything or everything that encompasses us and the earthly kingdoms we build with our hands, from paycheck to paycheck.

This is the life, the *psychē*, we are to lose.

There are no shortcuts. When we lose our life for Him and for the gospel, we save it.

Maybe it's not that important to watch that movie. Maybe we'll pick up our cross for two hours instead. Possibly we should go serve the poor or make a tangible two-hour difference in someone's life through our own sweat and earthly effort to bring a heavenly result. What if we got up early, before the ones we love, to pray for the ones that need love? What if we hungered for God more than food?

Maybe we should start asking ourselves questions like that.

I started asking myself those questions, and God started

showing me answers. Of course, they were answers I *needed* to hear but not always ones I *wanted* to hear. You know what I mean?

It's not an easy road to become a Static Jedi.

It means a shedding of distracting noise.

It's also a shedding of darkness that wants to distract.

Maybe the darkness knows the noise too?

The devil's minions are captured speaking with each other in *The Screwtape Letters* by C. S. Lewis. This collection of fictional letters are addressed to Wormwood, a new tempter, from a senior devil, his uncle Screwtape. In letter #22, "How to Recognize Noise and to Resist Avoiding the Silence," we listen in on the perspective and goal of the Kingdom of Noise, as Lewis calls it:

We will make the whole universe a noise in the end. We have already made great strides in this direction as regards the Earth. The melodies and silences of Heaven will be shouted down in the end. But I admit we are not yet loud enough, or anything like it. Research is in progress.<sup>3</sup>

Research yourself to make new progress on this path. It's a path littered by pieces of yourself as you walk closer to Jesus. Chunks of who you are fall down, and who you're becoming walks forward.

It's our first nature to be a slave to the noise, but your spirit man is crying out to be a slave to the King. If to live is Christ and to die is gain, we need to bring back the death of life.

But we don't like to die.

Death is scary.

## Calculating Clarity

So, again, how much time would you write down?

How much time do you really invest battling the noise each day?

You will have to do your own math. But you have to answer honestly. I can't answer this question for you, but there is an answer.

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Once you have your answer, take the number and multiply it by seven. That will give you the amount of time you invest in clarity each week, whether in hours or minutes.

If you answered in minutes, take that second number and divide it by 60 to get your weekly number of hours. For example, 30 minutes each day times 7 is 210 minutes per week, divided by 60 gives you 3½ hours spent in clarity each week.

Now multiply that number by 4, and that will give you close to the number of hours you invest each month becoming a Static Jedi—one who masters the noise. Some of us have 5, 14, or 26.3 hours of clarity invested in a 4-week period. You may have only 3 or 1 hour. Maybe you have just 20 minutes.

Whatever your number, know that your future awaits you. Be encouraged to know that God is revealing something new to you even now. When we feel as if our past actions overshadow our future, His Word assures us He is simply doing a new thing. For years you may have felt your faith was a wilderness. Or maybe recently you've found yourself more connected to the things of earth than the things above. But even in these wastelands God is making a way, and there will be fresh, life-giving water there. People God uses significantly often spend time in the desert, but they don't stay there.

The desert is a place we die.

It is also the place new life is birthed.

Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

—ISAIAH 43:18–19

If you are willing to pay the price, the person you become won't recognize the person you are now, once you get to the point of becoming that new person. When you get there, you'll

do more for your current world, helping others find who they are to become in Christ too.

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**If you read history you find the Christians who did the most for this present world were precisely those who thought most of the next.<sup>4</sup>**

—C. S. Lewis

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Think most of what matters.

Think less of what doesn't.

For change to occur, there will be a cost, and there is a price.

It's paid when no one is looking.

Without much private discipline in the mastery of noise, there is little public reward in piercing it. We need to follow Jesus back to how we should best live with clarity.

Let's get back to the sword. Let's be people of the blade, God's Word. Through His Word we fall in love with Him more, and because of this we love more.

Can you feel it? Change is in the forecast—a 100 percent chance of the Son shining upon you. Walk into the light, out from the noise found in the shadows.

Change takes place when stress is placed upon the target, and it begins with something stirring in your heart. For this internal shift to continue, you must begin to master the noise by journeying to become a Static Jedi—a form of disciple and sensei that masters the noise that exists in many shapes and consumes your time, your real life, and your ability to hear God.

So let's begin—today.

For you, greater things await.

## **Today, Begin**

The first step toward those greater things is tearing down your walls of noise and purposefully investing your God-given time

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into what truly matters, exchanging clarity for every box of noise you eliminate.

For every hour you invest each month in clarity, you get to take down one box from your wall of noise. So stand in front of our example of those fifty-six boxes of noise, and let's start removing them. Start bulldozing your wall from the top, one at a time.

How far did you get?

A Static Jedi lives to have no walls. Now, if God didn't like walls at all, we would have nowhere to hang awesome Christian bookstore art. But the walls God doesn't like are those that stand between us and Him or that stand in front of where He wants us to go.

Just ask Jericho.

■ **INTERNAL INQUIRY** ■

1. How tall is your wall?
2. What has been the source of noise in your life?
3. What could be sources of clarity in your life?
4. How do you define clarity or time with God?
5. Movie lines and song lyrics or the Word of God—which means more to you?
6. Does our level of knowledge reflect our affections?

■ **EXTERNAL EXCHANGE** ■

1. How much of our lives have we failed to live?
2. What are the walls of noise in your life keeping in?  
Keeping out?
3. Are we “over-noised”?
4. What did you feel God spoke most to you through this chapter?
5. How can we pray for each other as we ask God to help us dismantle our walls?
6. How many hours are you surrounded by your noise each day?

## Chapter 2

# CLOCKS AND CASH



**T**IME IS MONEY, so...let's go!"

The phrase reverberated around the dirty grease kitchen ravaged from the day's breakfast rush. Food scraps had formed an "everything" omelet on top of the stainless steel work area. The words echoed off the hanging pans stained with flame and then danced through the cooking smoke until they reached their intended target: my sweaty ear canal.

There I stood, on summer work from Bible school, called into early action from the ranks of a simple buffet table server to whip up fluffy omelets in the kitchen, in place of the main breakfast cook who had decided to drink more than his little liver could handle. Thanks to the years of mom-chef boot camp, though, I was prepared to answer my call into early culinary duty.

Determined to learn on the fly, I took on the challenge, working as fast as I could because, after all, *time is money*.

We've all heard that phrase—countless times, no doubt.

If not, just give it time.

"Time is money."

There. You heard it.

But is it, really? Are time and money equivalent?

Time is a form of currency—this is true. However, currency, or money, is something we can get more of. Of course, money is not found on a shelf at the store. Most of us don't have a money

tree we can visit to pluck paper and metal fruit from its branches. But we can get more. Legally or illegally at the bank, there is money waiting for us.

The most common way to acquire additional green is by trading time for dollars. We are compensated with renewable currency for punching the clock, doing chores to cash in on our allowance, or carrying out our salaried duties. Because our time has value, time is a form of wealth.

However, unlike money, we simply cannot commandeer more time. Once time is gone, it has flown forever. There is no endless supply. Time is the currency before which all other currencies bow.

When we are bankrupt in the richness of time, the outflow of our lives becomes hurried and undervalued. Time may feel different on occasion, but it's the same amount mathematically. Occasionally time feels slow, and with each wretched click of the clock we watch it drag.

And drag.

Ask any student stuck in the self-induced prison of detention, watching the second hand click through thick, dark molasses.



**Time is the currency before which all other currencies bow. #staticjedi @ericamueltimm**

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Then there's the way time felt slow—like life moving in slow motion—when I kissed my wife for the first time.

Summertime flies by, though, and we wonder where it went. Holiday breaks, our wedding day, the first three months of a new baby's life, our children's childhood, our forties.

If we look at time the way the ancient Mayans did, believing that time exists because our events do, then we may find a way to defeat time. Remove the events and time disappears.

Right?

The truth is we will always have events, large and small, so we

will always have time. Like gravity on earth, we cannot defeat time, only master it.

Everyone on the planet has the same allotment of minutes each day. No more and no less. There are 24 hours in each day, 168 hours in a week, and 8,736 hours in a year, and each one ticks by one millisecond, second, and minute at a time. Like sand though the hourglass, our moments slip away. Sometimes we capture the sand, and other times it falls quickly between our fingers. A day is too precious a treasure to forfeit.

But we convince ourselves there will be tomorrow. Waiting for the next day is like the slogan at my favorite place for pie in Harmony, Minnesota. The servers wear shirts that say “Free pie... tomorrow.” Come back tomorrow and read the same shirt.

I’ve decided to buy the pie today. Don’t wait for tomorrow. Rally to the cry of Mr. Keating in the film *Dead Poets Society*: “Carpe diem! Seize the day, boys. Make your lives extraordinary.”<sup>1</sup>

Too many people never catch tomorrow as they let go of today. They fail to capture the precious now and miss out on what they hope tomorrow will hold too.

You and I are given a daily life allowance of twenty-four hours. Time is the currency of life—like money.

## **The Greenbacks of Our Lives**

Money has a magical appeal. It’s a power force and an even more powerful puppet master. Once mastered, it can be a life flow for the giver and receiver. In Numbers 11, after Israel escaped slavery in Egypt, the rabble voiced its greedy desires:

Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, “Oh that we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at.”

—NUMBERS 11:4–6

We may not be in the wilderness like they were, but the rabble is still heard on every channel, in newsprint, and online through pay-per-click ads. Keeping up with the Joneses is our modern-day equivalent of tuning in to the rabble of Numbers 11.

Earthly treasure—money—is made of paper and metal. Paper has unlimited uses. We can use it for writing, for building Wright Brothers paper airplane replicas, and for wiping. Toilet paper is made of the same raw stuff as the stuff in your wallet, pocket, purse, or 401(k). This will keenly shape your perspective and help in emergency bathroom situations where paper is sparse.

Metal too makes up lots of things—arches, ape hangers, aircraft wing assemblies, anchors for ships. Boat anchors can be a burden to carry onshore outside of their intended purpose, or they can be an indispensable asset to a ship's crew set adrift.

So it is with money—it can be a burden or an asset.

Jesus talked a lot about money. In Luke 16:10 He says, “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.”

It doesn't matter if you have a lot or a little money. It's what you do with it that determines its power.

Is money a tool or an idol to you?

It depends on the posture of your heart toward it. We can spend money on gum, movie tickets, food, and gas for our SUV or hybrid car. (I drive a Prius. In a related story I turned in my “man” card, but they gave me a “green” one to replace it.)

Our currency easily escapes our grasp, spent daily on little things and occasional big things. Buying on credit, we trade our callings, dreams, and freedom for a nicer car with not-so-easy monthly payments.

One of my first decisions with my wife was to buy our first car. I wanted this 2003 GTI Golf twentieth anniversary edition in Imola race yellow—just one of two hundred fifty made with 1.8T, a side-mount intercooler, Recaro racing buckets, cold-air intake, a Dieselgeek short-shift kit, Porsche-vented breaks,

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a K04 upgrade, front and rear sway bars, an upgraded central ECU, Bilstein coilovers, NEUSPEED cat-back, a down pipe, a GReddy turbo timer, dual exhaust, all rolling on 18-inch BBS 2 part wheels. Basically a legal race car.

My wife wanted the Volkswagen Beetle, with the flower vase built into the dash. Basically a rolling prom bouquet.

Like all good marriages that last fifty-plus years, we came to a compromise. An agreement. A middle ground, so to speak.

We got the Beetle.

If you didn't laugh, just wait a few years after you're married. You'll see a pattern emerge. (Love you, honey.)

But do we spend?

Or do we invest?

## Investing in Honey 101

Investing is a simple concept. No black suit or subscription to the *Wall Street Journal* is needed for you to get this next part.

Let me break it down for you. Instead of buying honey, you want to own part of the honey farm that will give you a portion of the profits from others trading their money for that honey. This payback is called dividends.

Another way is to grow the part of the business you own. This is simply the farm's stock price. Buy low; sell high. You buy part of the honey farm when it is just a mom-and-pop operation, and then the farm goes factory, gets huge, and mom and pop no longer bottle the honey—they just have their picture on the label and a large home in Spain. When this happens, the part of the farm you own increases in value.

We invest money into savings accounts, stock market plays—otherwise known as intelligent gambling (cough, cough)—a 401(k), bonds, land, real estate, and our kids' college savings plan. Looking at dividends, payout on interest rates, and company-projected values, we seek a high rate of return on the money we've invested, or ROI. A higher rate of return means more value. More

value means mo' money, and mo' money means... (If you said "mo' problems," you are thirty years or older and liked rap music.)

A high rate of return ensures a place to stockpile the blessing and abundance we have been given. My small amount saved for the future is not so small compared to the amount my brothers and sisters in Christ make rummaging for recyclables in the Nicaragua trash dump to make \$400 yearly.

But my bank savings statement reminds me I have never seen a hearse with a trailer hitch pulling a U-haul packed with money and possessions. We don't dig two holes for the dead—one for them and one for their stuff. Remember this.

We trade money for gum, or honey, or honey-flavored gum, and we occasionally invest in retirement, school, and stocks in the hope of receiving good dividends. We never spend money. We only invest it. Everything pays a return. That gum you buy pays a dividend in the form of fresh breath. (Others enjoy that investment.)

The honey pays a return, as it's pleasurable in tea and on toast.

Spending money on a gaming system, a boat, a new shirt, or a DVD pays a brief form of return in entertainment before decreasing in value as those things sit and become outdated on the shelf or in the driveway.

Everything we spend money on pays a form of return.

Even if the return is zero.

While "zero" has no multiplying power, don't underestimate its value. Math is not possible without zero casting its thick, valueless shadow.

Valuelessness is possibly the most powerful value.

Here's what I mean. Sometimes the payback is outweighed by the cost. Our investments can rot, decay, be stolen, or be multiplied. Greater things are seen—maybe not directly by us—when we give to Jesus what He entrusted to our care. Give Jesus what you have, and what you give will never lose value; it will only

gain. If you keep what you should give to Jesus, then your eye has seen what you kept in its largest form of value.

Our investments in earthly things can rot, decay, be stolen, or be separated from us.

However, if we give Jesus what we have, what we give Him will never be less.

Greater rewards are seen—maybe not directly by us—when we invest into Jesus. It will always pay higher return.

By keeping, we keep things small.

By giving, we expand them.

I used *we* because it's Jesus and us working together with whom He is and what we have despite what we are not.

A boy, faith, a willing heart, a simple lunch, and Jesus paid a high dividend.

Jesus multiplies our investments—just like fish and bread.

But we never spend money on fish or bread, remember. We invest in them. If we partake in eating, the nutrition to our bodies is the return on our investment. If we share them with others, the joy in giving them is our return.

We never spend money. We only invest it. Everything pays a return.

Everything.

## **Time, Traded**

Just like money, we never spend the currency of our lives. Time is not spent. Not gambled. Not traded. Not even given.

Time is invested.

Sometimes the return is immeasurable, and sometimes it's a loss. Invest time in homework, and your return is knowledge and good grades. Invest time in your children, and the payout comes later in life in the form of their confidence, honesty, and integrity. Time invested in your children yields memories. Time invested in your marriage pays back each year for hopefully fifty-plus years.

Invest time in exercise, and the dividend may be a healthier

heart and a keen mind. Invest time in *Guitar Hero*, and you may have mastered a plastic guitar, but the payout will be pretty low. Grab a real guitar and try the same Santana riff for a totally different story. Invest time comparing yourself to everyone else, and this comparing spirit returns nothing but negativity to you. Invest time focusing on your past, and even though it has been separated as far as the east is from the west, you see what has already come and gone in a place of present power.

### **Crazy Grandma Lorraine**

Each summer my Grandmother Timm visited us for a week. She showed up with crazy big hair and piano necklaces to drive us around in her huge baby blue Buick.

Life with Grandmother Timm was good. Real good.

When shopping with our mother, stacks of multicolored sugar cereal loomed out of reach. Like two puppies hopeful for a treat, my sister and I would stare at the Trix bunny and salivate. We saw Lucky Charms, Count Chocula, and Cap'n Crunch. We mustered enough courage to ask, to present our request before the queen, and our mom would kindly say the statement no kid wants to hear in the cereal aisle: "No."

Then she'd load the cart with regular Cheerios and kid-tested, mother-approved Kix.

But when Grandma brought us to the grocery store, it was open season on sugar. We had our license from the Department of Natural Resources, and sugar is a natural resource. We were ready to hunt us some sugar! When we got to the cereal aisle, where the hunting is real good, Grandma let us pick any kind we wanted. Two boxes! Each! Sugar Puffs, Apple Jacks, Corn Pops. The only way to decide was to scan for what treasure, decoder, or mail-in toy certificate lay within. (I never waited for the box to be empty to retrieve the toy. Just dug to the bottom, coating the cereal with my skin cells for everyone to enjoy. Hungry?)

When we arrived home, Grandma would make us sit on the

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couch while she hid the cereal. It was a true sugar expedition to find each box. A lot of effort for cereal.

Looking back, it was never about the cereal. More than clicks on a clock, my grandmother's investment of time in my sister and me shaped us and gave us much—including cavities.

When we invest our life's currency into things that matter, mastery is possible.

In valueless time mastery is also possible—the mastery of nothing.

Read that again. It's good. Jesus told me to write it.

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**Mastery** \ˈmɑːst(ə)rē\ n 2 a : possession or display of great skill or technique b : skill or knowledge that makes one master of a subject.<sup>2</sup>

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Throughout history, heroes had one thing in common: they were masters of their craft. We are never remembered for what we are good at; we are remembered for what we master.

One hour at a time.

## Your Investments

How do you invest your time? Let's find out.

Get a wallet, envelope, billfold, coin purse, or that plastic coin holder businesses used to use as promotional items that I always thought looked like plastic lips. (Why would my bank want to give my mom and dad plastic lips?)

To do the following exercise, you may have to go to your bank and use your lips. Ask the teller to break down twenty-four dollars, denarius, or yen—or use Monopoly money and coins. Get twenty-two single dollar bills, and then make two dollars out of quarters, nickels, dimes, and pennies. The mix of coins is not important as long as the combination of twenty-two one-dollar bills and coins equals twenty-four dollars.

Now put the money in your envelope or wallet or hold it in your hand.

These twenty-four dollars represent the twenty-four hours in every single day. Let's invest our daily allotment using the money to represent our time and see where it goes.

First, count out sleep. I love sleep. I dream about it. Without rest we become cranky or even sick. All creatures need a form of rest. If you have little kids, you get less sleep. If you're a youth pastor or volunteer and do those all-night lock-ins—which are renamed at 3:47 a.m. to be called “hell on earth”—you are not getting paid enough and really throw the math off for this illustration.

During our normal routine, humans sleep. So count out seven dollars in bills to represent seven hours of sleep, and set them aside.

Twenty-four minus seven dollars subtracted for sleep leaves us with seventeen dollars.

Work or school is typically an eight-hour daily investment. If you're salaried or taking night classes, it may be more or it may be less. Count out eight dollars in bill form and set them aside.

You now have nine dollars remaining in the original stack of twenty-four dollars we started with.

Next, we invest time throughout the day to travel—walking to and from class or our next appointment, driving kids to school and lessons, driving to and from work, and so on. According to a Gallup survey, people average 45.6 minutes commuting to and from work in a typical day. Let's round it to an hour each day burned up in hall crossings, windshield time, or on a pedal bike keeping all things green.<sup>3</sup>

After deducting a dollar for travel, eight hours of your life's daily currency remains.

What about personal hygiene? Are you that older sister in the bathroom who spends two hours getting ready? Or do you never shower? Either way, that's a problem for the others in your life.

Do you prefer to find a nice quiet, private, clean bathroom where you can grab a magazine or play your Nintendo 3DS? My

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grandfather threw the math way off on this one. When he went into the bathroom, it was, well, an event. He would go in and come out the following week with the Encyclopedia Britannica A through L in hand, read all the way through. I wondered if there was a secret door in his bathroom that he used to sneak out. I could only hope he would escape to a magical workshop for hours to make toys for the children of the world. What I'm saying is Santa possibly makes toys on his toilet time. That is multitasking. Reading on the toilet is possibly the only time men multitask.

OK, remove one more dollar from the stack for extended personal time, showering, bathing, and other getting-ready routines. Our twenty-four hours, or bills, are now down to seven. Five single bills and two dollars in change should remain.

Now we need to carve out time to eat. I love to eat. I love to make food, then serve food, then eat it and end with dessert. But meals have become rushed, hurried, and distracted. The typical mealtime is far closer to bearing its secondary fruit of nourishment to our bodies than its original intention of providing a time of fellowship and rest.

Most of the workforce and student population has a half-hour for lunch. Figuring a conservative hour prep-time, execution, and clean up of each meal in a given day, count out a dollar bill.

Four single bills and two dollars are left. Six hours remain.

Now grab the remote, and let's invest some television time. As a kid my favorite show was *Saved by the Bell*. I wanted to be A. C. Slater, but I looked more like Zach Morris.

The average person watches several hours of TV daily. At my house there are days the TV is never on. Other days I watch a comedy with my wife, a marathon on a network, or a movie with my kids.

For the consumption of pleasurable or informational programming via TV, movies, DVDs, and possibly newspaper reading, deduct one dollar to represent one hour a day.

Three single bills and two dollars in change should be left in your “time” pile.

Now, how many hours a day are you on your smartphone or in front of a computer on a social network? Maybe you endlessly search sales, products, blogs, and YouTube. What about composing personal e-mails? For the 4.8 billion people on Twitter and Facebook, social media has become an integral part of the day. I know it’s a part of mine. (I’m on Twitter at [twitter.com/ericssamueltimm](https://twitter.com/ericssamueltimm) and Facebook at [facebook.com/ericssamueltimm](https://facebook.com/ericssamueltimm).)

In this private and public arena we send information about ourselves to the worldwide interwebs and have “friends” we don’t really know. For many it has crossed the threshold of something we control to something that controls us. This constant connectedness keeps us connected to those not in the room while keeping us disconnected from the ones who are.

These digital forms of communication and information gathering can quickly supersede the remaining currency of time we have left. If that’s the case, you’re overspent and in debt to what could be a source of noise in your life.

For a conservative two hours on the Internet, pay out two dollars.

Now, three hours of our original twenty-four remain, represented by a one-dollar bill and two dollars in change.

Talking on the phone and text-messaging happen throughout the day. Talking to and texting parents, friends, kids, and the pizza delivery guy easily add up to a half hour. Depending on your age, other things such as sports, homework, working out, laundry, banking, yard work, or basic housework can consume an additional hour each day.

Count out \$1.50 from your remaining stack.

Only \$1.50—or ninety minutes—remain.

Coins in hand, raise your arm over the countertop.

Let the change go.

That’s a familiar sound of change clanging. Maybe it’s the exact

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sound God hears each day when we bring Him our leftovers, giving Him what we can scrounge up in the couch cushions of our lives—and expecting a high rate of return on the investment, no less.

God may not like change, unless it's our heart.

Giving Jesus no time, or a specific “devo” time slot, breeds guilt or piousness that comes with the check-box life. So why bring Him your change or further set aside part of your day as “devo time” and expect a high return on your investment?

If we are cheap with our relationships on this earth, we can see firsthand the effects of our stinginess. If we continue to be conservative in our pursuit of God, our love for Him will remain conservative. But can we easily overlook our stinginess?

There have been times I've said with white knuckles, “I'm going to do long daily devotionals every day!”—only to get off track about mid-January, after all those resolutions become history and we become extremely discouraged with our lack of solid follow-through.

A bookend experience hanging out on the other end of the shelf is when, after spending that scheduled time with God, I've responded to my family or a situation in a way so very unlike Christ amid the sea of noise.

Maybe you can relate?

It's important to concentrate part of each day for personal fellowship with the Father through prayer and the study of His Word, but that can easily be the only moment we speak with Him. Is there a rich and rewarding alternative? A way to take on Christ's yoke that's internally restful?

Yes. Become a Static Jedi.

Become a student of the Master, again, or for the first time.

A scholarly quest it is partly, a spiritual one fully.

The word *scholarship* from the Latin word *scola*.

Translated from this root form meaning “free time.”

This quest is investing differently but also about protecting the time you have to call “free.”

This spiritually scholarly time comes only at a cost to the less profitable investments.

It is impossible without expanding the margin.

The blank space in your life.

Masterless mastery is obtained when battling without creating space.

Battling this noise is creating space for God and acknowledging the space He occupies,  
which is all of it.

Invite God into *all twenty-four hours* of your day.

Seek God through devoted investment,

but also through determined involvement.

This is the path of a Static Jedi. Jesus becomes part of the currency. Intentionally not investing time with Jesus or intentionally excluding Him from the rest of our time does not make us into masters of the static.

Rather, it compartmentalizes our walk with Him.

Jesus loves to walk with us.

He loves to be with us all the time—

not just in the scheduled

time or in the leftovers.

The only change He wants is our hearts.

Let's change

by rearranging the change.

■ INTERNAL INQUIRY ■

1. Where have you invested the currency of your life with a low payout?
2. Is your life overspent?
3. Where are you investing your time overall? What's the ROI?
4. Is money your tool or your idol? How does this affect the investment of your time?
5. Are you giving God your "spare change"? What needs to change?

■ EXTERNAL EXCHANGE ■

1. What's the first thing you invested your money in this morning? What was the ROI?
2. How can we invite Jesus into our twenty-four hours rather than giving Him the leftover change?
3. What do you think our most valuable resource is? Why?
4. What excuses do we make to wait for tomorrow for something good God wants us to do today?

## Chapter 3

### OIL AND WATER



**P**OUR OIL AND water together, and they refuse to mix. A chemical tension and resistance exists on a molecular level that keeps the two from playing nice. They separate, and very apparent is the clear divide between the two. This occurs on a catastrophic level when an oil tanker or sub-oceanic pipeline splits open. Once the money pipes are dumping liters of crude oil into the ocean, you'll see the black cream rise to the top.

Water mixes with other liquids to form solutions—especially with two cups of sugar, red #40, and flavoring on a hot summer day. Kool-Aid is the taste of childhood summers. (I like to double the sugar in the recipe on the side of the box and consequently double the kidney stones.)

As for the oil and water relationship, science explains that the density of the two are different. The poet would say it's as if they're from two different worlds—the Capulets and the Montagues.

Like oil or water, we approach mastering noise from two different sides of the tracks. Two different ways of looking at the world.

Christian or non-Christian.

Which one are you?

Beyond hobbies, employment, family relationships, and convictions, we can boil it all down and see there is one of two worlds we come from. Oil or water. We may currently be living

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in a Christian home, surrounded by Christian influences, or living in a non-Christian home, surrounded by non-Christian influences.

Christian or non-Christian worldviews.

Oil or water.

Past or present.

Whatever your past or current surroundings may hold, the noise can be mastered. If you are surrounded by faith in Jesus or surrounded by faith in other things, people, or gods, this mastery of the noise is still yours to grasp, and yours alone.

One perspective does not have it easier than the other.

I hope that someday things are not so divided into neat sub-cultures. This us versus them mentality has to be replaced and supplanted with grace. I hope for a time when rock bands can make music about their Creator and we don't have to decide what "market" they operate in. Oil or water markets. A time when the word *Christian* ceases to be an adjective but remains what it is supposed to be: a noun. This is when Jesus comes to town.

Everyone needs Jesus in their town.

However, He won't arrive, because He is already there.

We just all need to look more like Jesus.

We all need more of Jesus.

This is your personal responsibility. It's possible to seek more, but this is an everyday, every moment decision. Just like faith.

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

—HEBREWS 11:6

God loves a hearty faith stew. This full-flavor faith stew consists of two main ingredients:

1. An overflowing measure of reception
2. An abundant quantity of rejection

Reception that our lives need no other ingredient than Jesus Christ.

Rejection of the belief that we are enough.

This reception and rejection is possible for those who had either Christian or non-Christian upbringings and surroundings. The decision toward faith is equally accessible to both. Faith, and the finding of faith, may be influenced by environment, but the decision remains our own.

Jesus died for Jew *and* Gentile, for oil *and* water. He seeks that which was lost and sets free those bound up in religion. History was forever changed when God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. Now we are each invited to know Him. To have a relationship with Him. Without believing and confessing God's gift of forgiveness and reconciliation through His Son, Jesus Christ, we are separated from God. Because of faith in Christ and His grace, we are reconciled to the Father. "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18).

Just as you could first decide to follow Jesus no matter your surroundings or history, it's also possible to discover who we are through Him rather than who the noise pulls us to be. The noise of our past and our surroundings can try to hinder us from mastering the noise. It labors to keep us from putting on our new identity in Christ. Further, we can hinder our own selves.

The rub is that we easily identify with who we used to be, before we were in Christ. It's as easy to slide back to our familiar habits as it is to settle into a worn dip in a mattress. Our nature, surroundings, and past wrap like strings around us, and soon we are focused on the unimportant, lacking conviction and dancing to the flat notes of the noise, only to speak occasionally with a shallow tone and weak voice.

We go back to what we know best: the noise of our old self.  
Is there something better for us?

## Stolen Identity

Sometimes followers of Christ claim their old identity.

I'll give you one example.

"I'm just a sinner saved by grace."

A sinner. Hmm.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

—2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

I have to tie myself to the anchor of who He is and who I am through Him. The Word says I was a sinner saved by grace, but through Jesus, the old is gone and the new has come. You and I sin, but our identity is not a sinner. See the "but" in that last sentence? Buts are great, but not everyone realizes they have them. In God's Word there are big buts, little buts, and butts in the form of donkeys. The Bible is filled with "buts" and a whole collection of "used to bes." Put them together, and it's a powerful equation.

Used to be a tax collector, but...

Used to be a leper, but...

Used to be a corpse, but...

In Christ you are a "used to be." You *used to be* a sinner. But in Christ we are no longer sinners. We sin, but that is not our identity.

Change the song.



**The Bible is filled with "buts" and a whole collection of "used to bes." Put them together, and it's a powerful equation.**

**#staticjedi @ericssamueltimm**

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This identity crisis most easily haunts those who are slaves to noise. The noise pulls us back to the old melody of who we used

to be and hides who we are in Jesus. Through Christ we have a new identity, so we should not be speaking to our old man, the sinner, and giving him his identity back. The more we act on our pursuit of Christ, the more we discover who we are.

Discover the treasure of who you are in your new identity through Jesus by mastering the noise that seeks to place you on a treasureless path.

Know Him, not *of* Him.

Know who you are through Him and less of who you are without Him.

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

—COLOSSIANS 2:6–8

## **Actions Speak Louder Than Words**

You speak to your old self with your actions, not just words. Actions can speak louder than words, in fact. When we don't take action, we foster the mistaken reality of our old identity. Salvation isn't the issue at hand here. The goal isn't just to "get in."

I've lived in the dangerous place of living like I know Christ, when in reality I knew a lot of noise and a lot about noise, but I only knew *of* Jesus. And by grace I never want to return. I don't want to live a religious check-box life, nor do I want leave the Father's side.

Let's think about this in terms of a story Jesus tells that's found in the Gospel of Luke. It's a story of two sons and their father. Naturally the father loves them. In the story he is found on two separate occasions waiting upon each of his sons to draw near to him. One son stays near the father and lives his perfect

check-box life. The other son goes away and squanders his wealth, life, and everything the father had given him.

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**Few are they who by faith touch Him; multitudes  
are they who throng about Him.<sup>1</sup>**

**—St. Augustine of Hippo**

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The father is caught in the story waiting and waiting and waiting for the boy that left his side to finally come home—until one day his wait is over. With nowhere left to turn, his wayward son decides to return home. Upon the return of his boy, the father runs to him, accepts him, and throws a huge party.

This is viewed by the other son—the son who never left—to be an undeserved celebration, and it's more than he can stand. After all, there was no celebration for him and his right living that he'd done along. In his mind he's the deserving one, not his dissident brother. So in protest he refuses to join the celebration.

The father leaves the party, escapes to the other side of the door, and begs this beloved son who has been there by his side all along to come in and celebrate the return of his lost brother. After pleading with his son, in a failed attempt to convince him, the father escapes back to the party on the other side of the door. There the father is left waiting, waiting, and waiting, for his son does not enter when the celebration rings for his brother's arrival home.

The story ends at that moment, but it continues today. And while many revelations exist within this story, I care to focus on the father.

God is the father, waiting on the sons.

He is waiting on you.

But the noise has had your attention.

In the story it was possible for either son to take action toward the father—to either come into the party or just come on home.

The same is true for you.  
Take action.  
The father will respond.  
Abba is waiting.

## Oreos and the Rapture

There is no question about whether a dad loves his child once the dad has assembled a bike. Bikes used to come in a box, and it was a process just to get the two-wheeler road worthy. My dad put together my Huffy bike one Christmas after I opened the gift by ripping the paper and box to shreds.

I still remember that first ride at Easter.

(Assembly was a little harder than expected.)

Riding home from school on that Huffy bike was the highlight of my day. With that last class under my belt, I had a new sense of purpose: riding to Chuck Little's store for blue moon ice cream. Pedaling with no hands, I arrived home with an ice cream in each hand.

One time when I got home, both my parents were gone—and like any normal pastor's kid, I instantly thought the Rapture happened.

I was left behind.

I had sinned that day, so it was over. The *Thief in the Night* video I had seen at Royal Rangers would be my new reality.

In my panic I searched the church directory for the phone number of a board member named Mr. Elward Engle. When Mr. Engle prayed, not a missionary on the world map in the church foyer was left unmentioned. When we played basketball, he wouldn't even get mad—I would be furious at a bad call, and Elward would be cool as a cucumber.

On this pre-tribulation occasion my parents were nowhere to be found, so I dialed up Mr. Engle. The conversation was pretty short.

“Hello, this is Elward.” He had an earthy, James Earl Jones voice.

Pause.

“Hello, this is Elward,” the one-way dialogue continued.

Click.

As soon as he picked up, I knew the Rapture hadn’t happened. If anyone was ready to see Jesus, it was Elward. He wasn’t going to miss it. This I knew.

But more often than those post-apocalyptic scares, my mom was home to welcome my sister and me. A quick after-school snack, consisting of a sleeve of Oreos and a half-gallon of milk, and it was outside to play football with the Moon boys. In between I would go say hi to my dad and buy a forty-cent Pepsi from the pop machine.

Dad was, and still is, a pastor. He’d be doing his normal daily routine at church, and after finishing my after-school sugar buffet, I would walk through the side door of the parsonage and up the back part of Thompson Hall. Usually Dad wasn’t in the office behind a desk. Nor was he downstairs setting up chairs. As I got closer to the sanctuary, I could hear the worship music. Once I heard the music, I knew where he was: on the front row, near the organ that Delbert Greenman played, Bible open on his knees. My father was in prayer. That image is ingrained in my heart, along with the orange 1978-style carpeting on the floor of the church.

You could incorrectly assume this type of Christian experience while growing up would facilitate an easy transition for me to find and pursue God. I grew up in a Christian environment, and my greatest worldly influence—my dad—is a God-chaser. As a child of God, Dad daily pursued the person of God, mastering the noise and living in the realm of clarity.

Yet even in these secure insulators, I had to make the decision to know God rather than know *about* Him through secondhand faith. I had to deal with my wall by investing my time differently. I had to journey to become a Static Jedi.

If I had made that decision earlier in life, years would have

been invested, not just spent. So much time slipped through my hands that I cannot get back.

Those hands would have directed the symphony of my life differently if I'd come to know God sooner. I would never have used that hotel pen to write my own suicide note. The pen would have stayed next to the hotel pad where it had been placed, used to write a pizza order for a family or to collect the numbers for the hotel Wi-Fi passcode.

For some people the greatest testimony of faith is the prevention of pain. Others experience radical redemption from a path that threatened to consume their life. We can be rescued from oil or water—and both are great stories. However, like grass being greener on the other side, oil appears darker or the water clearer. Our stories are as unique as our backgrounds.

My wife, Danielle, has a testimony that astounds. Like mine, a small part of her story involved coming home from school as a kid. However, she wasn't a pastor's kid. She didn't go to a church after school. Her journey home looked a little different from mine. Maybe yours did too.

## Storms in the Garage

Danielle rode her bike over dirt roads, or sometimes took the bus, to the far corner lot with cows just beyond the electric fence—the same electric fence that I discovered years later while using the outside restroom behind the evergreens. (It was a *shocking* Christmas.)

A sister to eight siblings and now an aunt to the drove of nieces and nephews, Danielle is no stranger to the term *dull moment*. Through many seasons, both turbulent and peaceful, her family always remained strong together.

At home for one of these seasons, Danielle weathered a storm. For many years it rained at her house. Mostly in the garage.

Raining regret.

Raining an unsettled peace.

## STATIC JEDI

Raining fear.

All this rain drove like an inner storm in her father's heart. Dealing with the rain of pain is a challenge for each of us. Being around this type of rain gnaws a soul. Turn on the news and you see it raining all over the world, and it's tough to stomach. It's downright hard, but the answer is always the same: When you're in the rain, you need a covering.

A shelter.

An umbrella.

During the Old Testament Passover, the blood of a lamb covered God's chosen people. In the New Testament Jesus is that Lamb. In the Old Testament the blood was applied to the doorposts of a house. In the New Testament the blood is applied to the doorposts of our hearts.

Jesus Christ is our covering, and death has to pass over.

It rains on everyone.

It may be storming, but there is a covering. Life may be challenging, but there is a covering.

It may seem impossible,

hopeless,

doubtful,

fear-ridden,

and pain-laden,

but there is a covering.

You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

—MATTHEW 5:43–45

We cannot control the rain, but we can control where it does not fall. In Danielle's life it rained around her. For a season the

rain of fear and frustration made a daily appearance in the garage of her house. Danielle's father, I believe, simply forgot to turn to his umbrella. So the rain poured, and his shelter was different.

There are other umbrellas, but only one is red with the blood of Jesus.

Danielle's father sought shelter in alcohol. It's not uncommon. Boxes of empty beer cans stacked up in the garage. Occasionally the inner turmoil spilled over onto others. Verbal stones of silence hit hard. My wife and her brothers and sisters got bruised.

Despite the negative circumstances, my wife had a choice. She chose to pursue God and master the static.

She had to decide.

Years later my father-in-law, whom I deeply love, is a tender-hearted Irish man. Rough on the exterior but soft in his core, he is undeniably rich, with loving sons and daughters and thirty-something grandchildren. God is transforming his life! My goal is to beat him fairly at a game of croquet. (There is "good at croquet," and then there is "really good at croquet," and a few notches above that is my father-in-law.)

Whether you have a Christian or non-Christian background, it's possible to master the noise. Whether you're surrounded by either, it's your choice to have faith. Walking in your new identity in Christ is an everyday, every moment decision. The Father is waiting for us to take action.

We need to love Jesus more than the noise.

Here is the crazy part: the decision to love you has already been made. Before you do anything or become anything, God has already made the choice to love you. You were loved and chosen first.

Here's something even more insane: God already knows everything about you. Before you were born, before you were formed, He knew what you would like on your pizza, your favorite color, and your list of excuses.

## STATIC JEDI

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.

—JEREMIAH 1:5

God already knows and loves you down to the molecular level. Now you get to know and love Him down to your molecular level too.

Move out from under the thumb of the noise and know and love God like He already knows and loves you. Position your life differently so you begin to love differently. This is unfailingly possible for Christians and non-Christians, no matter their past or current surroundings.

Jesus is more powerful than your upbringing.

Jesus is more powerful than your journey, then or now.

Jesus is more powerful than the body connected to the hand that slaps your face.

Jesus is more powerful than the burns of someone's splattering, hateful tongue ripping across your soul.

Jesus is more powerful than your ministry.

Jesus is more powerful than your church's brand.

Jesus is more powerful than your lost or forgotten ability to trust and love a father.

Jesus is more powerful than your pastor dad.

Jesus is more powerful than the death that's loomed in your life.

Jesus has all the power inside and outside church. He is over our current surroundings and our past. He combines them and makes something new.

## A New Dawn

The simplest way to combine oil and water is to add dishwashing liquid. Detergent, at the molecular level, is mutually attracted to water and oil, thus forming an emulsion. This chemistry is displayed in the natural when you wash those dirty dishes in the kitchen sink after you had company.

Displayed in the supernatural, detergent takes on oil or water through Jesus's love for all of us. He can have lordship over your past, present, and future noise. He is ready for you to know more of Him, not just about Him. Decide for the soundtrack of your life to be found in the hymnal song "Washed in the Blood." For this is a new dawn—just like the dishwashing soap.

What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.

—MARK 10:9

Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing pow'r?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?  
Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Are you washed in the blood,  
In the soul-cleansing blood of the Lamb?  
Are your garments spotless? Are they white as snow?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Are you walking daily by the Savior's side?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?  
Do you rest each moment in the Crucified?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

When the Bridegroom cometh will your robes be white?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?  
Will your soul be ready for the mansions bright,  
And be washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Lay aside the garments that are stained with sin,  
And be washed in the blood of the Lamb;  
There's a fountain flowing for the soul unclean,  
Oh, be washed in the blood of the Lamb!<sup>2</sup>

—ELISHA A. HOFFMAN

■ INTERNAL INQUIRY ■

1. What has your journey home been like?
2. Do you believe change is possible for you?
3. In what ways have you been living in your old identity?
4. What stains in your life need to be washed?

■ EXTERNAL EXCHANGE ■

1. Are you from Christian or non-Christian surroundings?
2. How has this been a source of noise in your life?
3. What is your “used to be” and “but”? (I used to be \_\_\_\_\_, but . . . )
4. Why do you find it difficult to believe God loves you—and loved you before you were born, even knowing what you were going to do?
5. How should the truth of God’s love help us live differently?

## Chapter 4

### JUST BUTTER, BABY



**M**ORNING TOAST. ONE of my favorite meals of the day. The endless butters, jams, and spread choices create food art combinations that are mathematically astounding. According to Trader Joe's label, apple butter must have double the amount of fruit than sugar to be called "butter." It's a law. Anything less is plain old jam. File that in the section called "Who cares; it's delicious" or under random laws and street signs.

Salted sweet cream butter on a nearly burnt piece of Ezekiel bread is some good toast. "Mmm, good toast," to quote Nacho Libre. (Don't worry if you don't know who Nacho is; if you know, you know.) The butter sings as it melts and fills the little canyons on the sprouted grain surface. Are you hungry? Enough reading. Let's have a toast break.

Get some toast. Serious. Drive if you have to, or borrow bread from your neighbor next door. For my wheatless wonders of the world, get a gluten-free option.

Get some butter—salted butter, if you can. Or if you're not a friend of Mr. Lactose, use something like Mrs. Margarine instead. Nothing is better than real butter in my book. And this *is* my book. However, you bought the book, or it was given to you, so in that sense it's *your* book. But technically I wrote it, so it's mine. OK, it's your actual book, so we can compromise and

call it *our* book, metaphysically speaking. However, this is my toast I'm making, and I'm going to use a sea of salted butter.

Once you have your bread, you'd better get your toast on. Toast that bread to your liking. I personally like waiting until I see smoke, just shy of flames, coming out of the toaster when I'm toasting my bread.

Once the toast is done, put that butter goodness on it—and in a special way. Not the way it's normally done, with a smooth swipe evenly distributed. Instead, clump a teaspoon in the middle of the bread and resist the urge to spread it out.

Let it soak.

Let it get melty.

After twenty seconds the tiny iceberg of butter dissipates into the toast.

Now, beginning with the crust, slowly eat all around the edge. It's pretty dry out there in no-butter land. The rich butter is in the middle, and we haven't reached it yet. But continue inward by munching around the center until only the center of the toast remains—about the size of a United States fifty-cent piece or a Canadian “two-ney.”

In the center, by now, is a deep, fragrant pool of rich butter floating on the surface of perfectly toasted bread.

Eat that final morsel. That flavor-soaked middle. Delicious.

Where the butter was thin, the taste was pleasant. But where the butter was clumped, you taste the best and most flavorful bite of the toast.

The only way to improve on this bliss is to complement that last bite of butter toast with coffee. Now, good coffee is a relative term. You coffee snobs and connoisseurs know exactly what I'm talking about.

My pastor, Andrew Cass, roasts his own beans and occasionally shares a bag with me. His coffee brew is a smooth, dark, handsome Scorpio with that specialty Euro-roast goodness that I like. He gives me a little bag of beans—*little* being the key word.

He uses the smallest bag he can buy that Ziploc makes. Really, he must say to himself in the small plastic bag section, “What’s the smallest bag I can get so that when I give Eric coffee, the bag looks full but it’s only, like, one cup worth?”

When Andy gives me the coffee at church, it feels like an espresso drug deal going down. He passes me one of those little bags that’s too small to fit a half sandwich, and I slyly take it into my possession. And with each exchange I want to pause and say a prayer for Andy’s heart. *May his generosity increase because I crave his roasted coffee.*

## The Other Mug

My morning coffee and toast structure begins early. I get up before the chaos wakes—two young sons, specifically, who are great at the beautiful distractions. Their words echo over the couch: “Dad, will you play cars with me?” In that instant my day is reprioritized. Learning to fulfill our children’s requests is an art form vastly crippled when we’re slaves to the noise—or immensely increased when we master it.

Each of us begins our day differently. We get ready for school or work or prepare for the day off. My goal every other day, even when traveling, is to beat everyone up in the morning—not with a right hook, but simply rising from my slumber before their day begins in order to get the good coffee and my toast on.

Once coffee is brewed, I pour a cup and place it in front of my seat on the table. Then I pour another mug and place it across the table from me, where it sits and waits.

My wife is still sleeping but soon will rise like the Kraken, consuming all the morning work and dirty laundry in the path to get to her cup of morning coffee.

But the other mug of coffee I poured is not for my wife.

I pour the second mug for Jesus.

He never drinks it—which leads me to believe He doesn’t like

the way I make coffee. Maybe I should try a French press or Pastor Andy's brew instead.

Jesus may not like coffee, but I think He likes having it with me. And maybe you should have coffee with Jesus too. How amazing would it be if all across the social media sites each morning we saw thousands of photos of people having coffee with Jesus. Communing with Christ over coffee. Instagram pics of lonely mugs look perplexing to one not familiar with this concept, but to God it is art.

Full mugs and expectant hearts.

Waiting on God.

Acknowledging His presence.

Listening.

Giving Him our day, each day, all day.

(It's a dream to see your pictures @ericssamueltimm on Instagram. I would suggest Lo-Fi filter.)

God invites us to start our day with Him and continue each day with Him every day. I have found it wise to accept His request. And I hope some morning I glance over at the mug I poured for Jesus and find it empty, supernaturally enjoyed by Jesus while I buttered my second slice of toast.

## **An Undying Passion**

In the stillness I find my heart growing hot while I seek the person I have already found. God is so much more than I know. And He can be known as a close friend or lover. You can know God far beyond salvation.

If you want to.

Seeking God beyond the first encounter to find His personality, character, Word, desires, and will is necessary if we are to master the noise. Take the relationship past a casual encounter. Move along the pendulum toward an undying passion. This stokes the flames of your love for Him. It turns interest into passion, like into love, logic into illogical acts of faith.

Unlike finding something and no longer needing to search for it, we must continue to seek God beyond the initial finding. Jesus is perpetual discovery. Individually we believe and confess Christ, and individually we pursue the deeper treasure of relationship. From this personal pursuit a deeper revelation comes and a stronger personal relationship grows.

The starting point for the body of Christ corporately seeking God together is usually found where each leaves off in their personal quest. It's a powerful and mysterious relationship.



**Jesus is perpetual discovery.**

**#staticjedi @ericssamueltimm**

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We all bring something to offer—called gifts—to strengthen God's movement of love on this earth. If we want to know our God-given gifts, we must know the giver. God, the giver of these gifts, is moving in our lives, churches, schools, businesses, and families. Personal revival is us responding to Him. Historical revival starts with one strong personal relationship and is fed by many strong personal relationships. It's like a fire with many logs—the more logs, the hotter the blaze.

Want to throw more wood on the fire?

You must have strong arms to carry more wood.

So let's start growing.

### **Grow Some Grass**

Ever had that neighbor with the perfect lawn? I do. Fred's lawn is an evenly cut, evenly green, four-inch-tall grass masterpiece. Look fast, and you would guess that it's more like AstroTurf than real lawn. Like a park, lush and green, his lawn remains perfectly cut without a single dandelion. I catch myself wishing I could play football with cleats on his yard. Or be like a snowboarder carving a path in fresh powder. Or take a snow-machine

in Alaska where no snow-machine has gone before. Perfect lawns scream for a round of full-contact croquet. Or a mixed-martial-arts-mini-golf-lawn-dart match. Perhaps the gentleman's version of golf, with rakes for the massive litter boxes frequented by neighborhood cats.

Beautiful, lush, green golf-course turf is the best. I can't believe it's real grass at times when I'm walking on the fringe at a course. Guys with college degrees spend their careers perfecting such perfect grass. (No, not weed. I'm speaking of actual lawns.)

The grass is always greener on the other side—or at least we think it is. However, it never is; it's green where we water it. So let's get out the hose and attend to our own lawns of faith, shall we?

For many, what should be plush lawns of faith are instead sickly, dried-up, brown, dead, patches of grass. Lack of water results in a plague called *lack of personal pursuit*. This sickness is a product of a minuscule bacterium with massive complications called *complacency*. Self-satisfaction with our relationship with God distorts, slows, boxes in, or kills our pursuit of Him.

Dying lawns are sickly with a self-love that old-school hipsters and early philosophers knew as *amour-propre*. This is a condition that results in feeling OK with our current lawn of faith, even though it's dry and sickly. We settle, and so the noise easily settles in our hearts too.

This is because our love is easily selfish. The noise has to do with the version of love that we know. God's love is selfless, but self-love haunted mankind in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve communed with God, and He was not found in their little home-made boxes—until they chased the fruit rather than the gardener. They were convinced they needed fruit and not the vine.

Just one bite.

One self-satisfying morsel.

The philosopher François de La Rochefoucauld, who shaped pillars of French thought, explores the enigma of *amour-propre* by saying, “Self-Love is the Love of a man's own Self, and of

every thing else, for his own Sake. It makes People Idolaters to themselves, and Tyrants to all the World besides.”<sup>1</sup>

While we may not rise to the level of being a tyrant toward others, we easily become tyrants to ourselves, bankrupt save for a single introductory encounter with God—an encounter left to erode for lack of tending. In God’s selfless love we see love gain its true power because a selfless love costs everything: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). God loved, so He gave. We never realize the power of real love unless we witness or experience a transaction, because real love costs.

### ***Ahava* Jesus**

A word used for *love* in the Old Testament, *ahava*, consists of four basic Hebrew letters. Viewed through the modifier or lens of the Word, it translates to “I love” or “I give.” To love is to give, and to give is to love. Down to the very way the word is constructed, loving and giving intersect.

What do you give to the ones you love? Time, money, life, honesty? The list goes on, because love costs. And real love costs everything:

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

—1 JOHN 3:16

Sometimes we need to start paying the price of a selfless love through the currency of our time—the currency of the hours we log on this earth.

The price paid for a relationship to grow with Jesus is the investment of our lives, and there will be a cost. Our relationship with Him must go beyond the first encounter. It cost us more than when we started. So we must love Jesus—*ahava* Jesus—more.

Coming to Jesus is the first step, but becoming like Jesus

is another process altogether and requires a selfless love. Discipleship means becoming like Jesus, not just filling our heads with knowledge, and it is not something we can do without dying to ourselves. It comes with a cost, and it's made with a choice.

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**Intense love does not measure, it just gives.<sup>2</sup>**

—Mother Teresa

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We must relentlessly pursue the revelation of who Christ is.

When compared to Christ, the things we hold tight are garbage. The endless media, social and antisocial engagements, things we find inside and outside of church, and the new, ever-changing, bright and shiny lures keep us from running toward the treasure that is Jesus. Throughout our lives we treasure this junk unless we consider knowing Him the treasure and those things the trash.

As you know Jesus more, you naturally love Him more. The less you know of Him, the less you love. To know Jesus is to love him.

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.

—PHILIPPIANS 3:8

Knowing Jesus is it. Once you begin to love Jesus more, everything in comparison, as Paul says in Philippians 3:8, is considered garbage.

Trash.

Not the treasure.

The refuse.

The leftovers.

Jim Elliot says, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."<sup>3</sup> To gain the treasure, you

must leave the trash. The cost is all garbage anyway. It is a dangerous trap to believe our search is over because we gained all the riches we are going to have. The mysteries and abundance of God never end, but our time is limited. Only so many mornings in one life.

The cups of coffee we can consume are boarded in by time and space—the very thing God holds in His hand. This calculable, limited time on earth has numbered our days, and each of them must count. It is very difficult to hold the treasure of knowing Jesus and *amour-propre* in each hand, for one of the arms shall be lost. Which one will it be? That's up to you.

Tomorrow, rise before the rest of your world. While the coffee brews, make perfect toast crowned with a pat of butter. Have coffee with Jesus, and continue to lay the foundation in this quest to master the noise.

■ **INTERNAL INQUIRY** ■

1. How has your pursuit of Jesus stopped?
2. In what ways are you more concerned with what you can get from Jesus than just investing time with Him?
3. Could you have “coffee with Jesus” this week? What would that look like for you?

■ **EXTERNAL EXCHANGE** ■

1. What happens when we don't allow our lives to become rich in the pursuit of Jesus?
2. Have you ever heard Jesus speak to you in a still moment?
3. When did your faith become something that was real to you—or has it?
4. What parts of your faith journey need to be watered?

## Chapter 5

### TWIN STONES TO STAND UPON



WHEN IT COMES to pursuing God deeper, we need to remember two things. These are what I call the “twin stones” that we must stand upon in order to build a life that masters the noise. With these twin foundations, we become much like the pat of butter in the middle of that toast: rich with flavor.

Let’s take a look at these two essential stones.

#### STONE #1: God Is a Person

God is a person, and you and I must pursue that person. Do we grasp this truth about the Father? We easily forget it. The static masters of the past, however, did not. The static masters of today won’t either. Your heart must never forget that God is a person.

A person on earth, made in God’s image, can be sought. People can live with each other for a lifetime and still be learning about each other. So it is with the Lord. Made in God’s image, we desire to be known—just as God does.



God is a person, and you and I must pursue that person. #staticjedi @ericamueltimm

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Do not strive to become a master of the noise for your vain remembrance. Heroes of the faith like Tozer, St. Augustine, St.

## STATIC JEDI

Francis of Assisi, and many others can and will inspire us, but we must pursue the vine, the person of God, as they did.

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

—JOHN 15:5

Jesus says it's not our job to produce the fruit but to pursue the vine—the person of God—which allows the fruit to grow.

My morning coffee break is about pursuing the vine, not the fruit. It's about pursuing the person of God, sitting there in front of me until the coffee goes cold.

This simple pleasure of having coffee with Jesus has radically changed my outlook on communing with Him. I have fallen in love with Him more. In this “more” I see less of what I need not see. My vision becomes fixed on love—or, in another word, Christ. I sit there, and the coffee sits there, and within that moment there lies the point. I wait a while, speak with Him a bit, and if Jesus doesn't drink His coffee, then maybe I have a second cup. Usually iced. And in this slow process of the degrees dropping in that coffee mug, I put skin on the standing stone that is the person of God.

A Static Jedi stands on this stone daily.

This is why the sacrament of Communion is such a visual reminder that Jesus, fully God and fully man, broke bread and passed the cup. He demonstrated how to remember what He was about to do on our behalf on a cruel cross, because He knows we easily forget.

And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

—LUKE 22:19

Pursuing the person of God is foundational to the mastering of the noise—to becoming a Static Jedi.

God is a deity that longs to commune with His creation. This triune God mysteriously exists in unity between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and He bridges every obstacle to be in unity with us—His beloved bride.

The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete.

—JOHN 3:29

Do you remember that God is a person, inviting you to know Him personally? As the bride of Christ, we need to seek out our groom. Like an earthly marriage, the groom continually seeks his bride even before the wedding day arrives. What happens if the bride does not seek the groom in return? The marriage does not have a different ending; rather, it just never begins.

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**You and I are in little... what God is in large.<sup>1</sup>**

**—A. W. Tozer**

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Eternal life in heaven promises joy and the absence of sorrow, but heaven is primarily about the coming together that happens after a pursuit that began on earth. It is the post-pursuit life.

Heaven will happen someday, but let's not wait.

Heaven can start now.

Pursue the King today and bring heaven to earth for yourself and others.

Place yourself in the eternal worship and pursuit of God now.

Beyond today, tomorrow, and the days that follow, the pursuit of God is not an isolated, one-time occurrence. This event does

not start and end. It is not a task to check off on the spiritual to-do list. It's something that continually becomes.

The fullness of God cannot be known in:

- ☉ A leadership conference
- ☉ A couples retreat
- ☉ A youth convention
- ☉ A camp experience

We don't get to know each other in a single encounter—that first encounter is merely the beginning. So too we can't expect our heavenly relationship with the Father to be grasped in an initial meeting. Having spent nine months developing inside your mother's womb, you didn't fully know her after you were born. Nor can you know everything about your spouse the moment you marry him or her. Yet we easily lug around the expectation that we will know God fully once we are introduced to Him.

The idea is shortsighted.

If I expected this of my wife, our relationship would be shallow, weak, sickly, and anemic. After years of marriage it's only through the process of seeking her, pursuing a friendship with her that's rooted in selfless love, and walking through trials both self-induced and circumstantial with her that I have even begun to plumb the depths of the woman who is my wife. Like the changing surface of a lively, pristine stream, she is fluid. Flourishing. Deepening. I will continually make new discoveries about my wife throughout our life together on earth.

Multiply that dynamic by infinity, and you'll start to come within a galaxy's proximity of the unlimited facets of God that can be known. And yet God beckons us to draw close and know Him.

What happens when we don't get to know God? The same thing that happens in relationships that don't include some measure of

continual pursuit. For my relationship with my wife, Danielle, to thrive, I need to incorporate diligence and discipline in my pursuit of her. If we expect earthly relationships to be secure after one encounter, that's a recipe for marriages to fall apart and close friendships to become just casual acquaintances. When we fail to truly know others, we live on relationship islands.

Islands are sometimes remote. Hard to find. When we stop personally pursuing the person of God, we arrive on an island.

Alone.

The remote becomes local—and that's not as it should be.

The first step toward that isolated island is forgetting God is a person.

What happens in the natural happens in the supernatural.

Have you vacationed on that relational island apart from God?

In our passive pursuit of Him, self-assured that our finite knowledge of the Creator is sufficient, we relegate God to an island address without us, and then we go and live on a different island apart from Him.

And maybe visit Him on His island.

Once in a while.

When we need something.

Or when something bad happens.

Or when something goes well.

During the times I've felt separated from God, the first step toward my self-induced isolated island destination was always the same. He didn't go anywhere.

I did.

We do.

You did.

The route to this island, where noise reigns as the tyrannical dictator, is forgetting that God is a person.

## STONE #2: God Has No Grandchildren

Most of us have families. We have mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, stepparents, and cousins. We have grandparents. Known or unknown. Alive or deceased.

Born of a mother, all of us are the grandchildren of someone. As grandchildren we have grandparents who are elderly, beautiful people with “Pinterest-able” old furniture and, if you are lucky, pink hair.

Grandparents have grandchildren when their own kids have kids.

But God doesn't.

God is not a grandparent.

He will never be a member of the grandparent club. Ever.

He is a father, and He only has sons and daughters.

Masters of the noise live as sons and daughters of the King. Slaves of the noise live as grandchildren.

This second truth has shaped each revivalist, God chaser, and disciple of Christ, and not one of them, authentic in their faith, has lived as a grandchild of the King. It is a timeless principle that masters of the static will always live as sons and daughters. Never grandchildren. A secondhand faith, piggybacked on another who has a relationship with God, becomes a “have to,” not a “get to” when it comes to the pursuit of God.

Your parents' faith will not carry you. Your grandparents' faith will not carry you. Your friends' faith will not carry you. Your parents' lack of faith will not carry you either. You do not inherit a “foundness” or “lostness” from your grandparents' spirituality or lack of spirituality. We must all come, as creatures created by God, to a place where we make the pursuit of God our own—not because we have to, but because we want to. The personal choice God gives us to make Jesus a part of our life is the starting point for each of us. In this place, identifying as a son or daughter of the King, we set another stone in the foundation to master the noise.

The twin stones that stand in clarity for us when we master the noise is remembering that God is a person and that He has no grandchildren. This foundation will foster your lawn of faith to grow and become deep and well watered. These two stones laid in the foundation of your heart will help keep you from being spread so thin you remain a clump of butter. Stand firm on this foundation.

How will you remember?

Choose to stand here or your feet will find other things to stand upon. You can easily build a life upon other stones, but that path leads to a false or partial life in the mastery of the noise. You become just a pseudo-Static Jedi or a quasi-Static Jedi. A false master.

■ INTERNAL INQUIRY ■

1. Since God is a person, how should that change the way and when you talk to Him?
2. Are you living on someone else's faith or your own?
3. How is Jesus found, beyond our first discovery of Him?
4. Do you have trouble seeing God in a personal way—as a person?

■ EXTERNAL EXCHANGE ■

1. What are the two stones to stand upon?
2. What can we do to remind us that God is a person?
3. What about the person of God do we need to seek?
4. What does it mean to you that God does not have grandchildren?
5. Do you see yourself as a child of God, or have you lived as a grandchild of God?