

Experiencing God When You Feel Like a Nobody Going Nowhere

Jokes- When I first realized that I was going to get to do this study, the weight of the responsibility really settled on me. I started thinking, man this is a big deal. I really thought about dressing up since I was going to be up in front of everybody. I thought about it for a bit then decided that really wasn't me. The really just would not have felt genuine. I decided that I really just wanted to be myself and stay comfortable. Gordon and Linda, I am actually surprised that they keep letting me in the pulpit because this is the third service running that I have stood up in the pulpit teaching in gym shorts and a t-shirt.

Also, I'd like to offer my sincerest apologies to those of you that spent half of the week looking for Psalm 161. My father sent me a text asking which Psalm we were studying today. I was feeling rather facetious at the moment and told him it was Psalm 161. I just thought it was because he didn't pay attention, so I wanted to razz him a bit. I fully expected him to call me out immediately and say that's funny because that didn't exist. What I didn't realize, was that some of you were asking him because you really wanted to make sure you read ahead. I didn't realize he would text that to you and have a bunch of people saying they couldn't find it.

Do you feel lonely? Depressed? Or maybe just numb, kind of bland like you are a nobody going nowhere. Life lacks purpose and focus and meaning. And down deep, you don't really think that anybody cares about you.

You know that you may have read or heard, that God created you as an individual, that you are custom made, that you are one of a kind. And that He has a great plan for you life, but you may not understand how to tap into it. You may not understand how important that you really are, and what your responsibility is to discover that plan. These are the kinds of things that we are going to discuss today.

How do you experience God when you feel like a nobody who is going nowhere? God has a plan. In 1988, there was a pastor who had a 2-year span where he felt like a nobody going nowhere. He had made a 5-year commitment to a little country Bible church after he had finished his schooling. When he started at the church it had about 35 people. God blessed them, and the church grew. But in year number 6, his commitment was over, and so he said, "Alright God, my commitment is over. Now what do you want to do with my life?" He loved the church. The people were awesome, and they loved his family. It could not have been a better place to live, except, he went to seminary after going through more school than he had previously wanted to, and he went to seminary with the express goal and purpose of being a missionary. God switched His path and said, "I want you to be a pastor."

That didn't sit well in this preacher's heart. Being a pastor in a rural area of 4,500 people in a town with no stop light was not the life of impact that this preacher had dreamed about. One day he remembered counting 16 churches within a half-mile radius. He said to God, "If people here in Coffman, Texas want to hear about you, there are plenty of people in this town to tell them. Why do you have me here?" He just felt like when God went through the rolodex of eternity that He had skipped right over his name. He felt stranded. Great people. But he wanted to be on the cutting edge. He had these dreams in his heart that he thought were God's dreams for him. Now he was just doubting all of that and thought that maybe they are not God's dreams at all. Maybe it was just his dreams. He went from there to thinking, well maybe that's not it at all. Maybe I'm just not competent. Maybe this is it. Maybe I don't have the wherewithal to make an impact like God wants me to.

He went to McDonald's with a close friend, and he was sharing his heart with him. His friend helped to keep his faith alive, but at this moment, this preacher really felt like he was a nobody going nowhere. Later on in his life, he learned that he had some wrong perceptions of God, some wrong perceptions of himself, and some wrong perceptions of his circumstances. Those all were at the core of his feelings that he was a nobody. If you happen to feel like a nobody, going nowhere. I want to suggest that what God wants to do for you as a gift because He loves you is to help you see 5 things, 5 truths, that will pour light into your soul. It will help change perspective so you can get a right picture of God, a right picture of your circumstances, and a right picture of yourself that will give you hope. It will remind you that you are not just a nobody. You are a somebody, and you are not going nowhere, but you are going somewhere very special if you open your ears, open your heart, and cooperate with God's plan for your life.

1. God knows you.
2. God is pursuing you.
3. God made you.
4. God has a plan just for you.
5. God expects you to respond to His plan, but we must be aware there is a war going on that will try to keep us from responding.

Lesson

1. God knows you.

Every time that you feel like you are a nobody going nowhere, I want you to think about Psalm 139. The first thing that you need to remember is that God knows you. You know He knows everybody, but God knows you specifically and intimately. Follow along as I read verses 1-6.

139 O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. 2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off. 3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways (all my traits, all my tendencies is the idea of that word). 4 For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. (Think about that, every single word you ever think or say, the thought process that goes into forming those words or those thoughts, God knows it before you even do it.) 5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. (This means that this idea is so incomprehensible, it's too overwhelming, it's too other. Wow, God you know everything.)

If you want to do a word study some time, look at some of these words here. Verse 1 searched me, know me, verse 2 know, perceive, discern, familiar, beset me (hemmed me in), laid your hand upon me, knowledge. 10 different Hebrew words used here in these first 6 verses. The author wants you to know and understand that God knows you. These are a variety of words to let you know that it is not a cognitive knowledge. God doesn't just know about you. He knows you. He understands you. He knows how you think. He knows your dreams. He knows your motives and fears. He knows exactly how you will respond in a situation, and He knows why you responded that way. In a word, you could say, you are understood by God. He is there. He is interacting, working, and He knows you infinitely more than you know yourself. If God knows

that much about me, and I know theologically that is true, then my response is like David's in the next few verses, and I want to run.

I want you to underline something in this first section. The phrase You have laid your hand upon me. It is a picture of God's protection and blessing. It is one thing for someone to know everything about you in order to use it against you, but it's something quite different for someone, an infinite, eternal, unapproachable being, who is infinitely holy and compassionate to know everything about you in order to lay his hand upon you. It's the picture of a father. What did they do in the Old Testament when they gave a blessing? They laid their hands upon them. The hands of protection, security, and blessing. If you feel like a nobody, you can choose to feel that way, but here are the facts. The facts are that you are understood completely by God, and He wants to lay His hand upon you to bless your life and protect you. That's pretty exciting. I know you have all those childhood experiences that tell you that nobody wants to do that for you. There is one person that would. God would. He loves you so much so that He sent His son Jesus to die for you to prove how much He loves you.

2. God is pursuing you.
 - a. He gives us direction.
 - b. He gives us security.
 - c. He gives us the feeling that we are wanted.

Let's look at verse 7-12. We learn that not only does God know everything about you, but get this, God is pursuing you. Isn't that a wild thought? He is after you. He is pursuing you. He is seeking you out. We are going to learn that thousands of times a day that your name comes to the mind of God. He is thinking about you and pursuing you.

Notice in verse 7 David says, 7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? (rhetorical question with the answer implied, nowhere) or whither shall I flee from thy presence? (nowhere) 8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. 9 If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; 10 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. 11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. 12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

That last statement is one of the most profound things in all of scripture. Did you get it? It's obvious that God is omnipresent (everywhere). It's taught here. He says if I went as high as I could or as low as I could, you are there. If I went as far east or west as I could, you are there. If I, hypothetically, even in my own mind could find a place, do you remember how little kids would hide. You have a 2 or 3 year old. You play hide and seek. What do that do? They cover their eyes. Can't find me mommy. What they don't know is that even though their eyes are shut, yours are open. Don't we do that with God? We play hide and seek, and like the 3 year old, our eyes are closed so we think He can't see us. He can. His eyes are always open and always on you.

You see what this passage teaches, that darkness and light are alike to God. God is other. Our problem when we think about God is that we think He is a grand, big, better version of the best

person that we know. He is not. We are tiny replicas made in His image with the capacity to love, feel, and choose, but He is other. That is what holy means. He is totally other. He is outside of time. He is all-knowing, all-powerful. He is the first cause. We are His creatures. He is the Creator. The galaxies, the stars, the solar systems and on and on and on. Light, darkness. He's outside of that category. They are both the same to Him.

But notice what it says, He is pursuing you. There is nowhere you can hide. Again there are a couple of key phrases to underline. Why is he pursuing you? It says, Your hand will guide me, circle that, and then make an arrow and write the word direction on your notes. God is pursuing you because His hand wants to guide you. He wants to give you direction in your life. Wouldn't it be great to get direction from someone who knows everything about the past, the present, and the future, and has all power to do anything with it that He wants? This sounds like a good position to be in.

Notice the other thing. Underline the words, will hold me fast, draw an arrow and write the word security. Not only does He want to seek you out, to pursue you, to find you. He wants to do it, not just to give direction, but to give security. He won't let you down. When His right hand takes hold of you, no one, nothing has the power to separate you from His love. Right? It says in Romans 8:28-39, not angels, not principalities, not life, not death, nothing can separate you from His love. God is seeking you, he is pursuing you, a regular person. It's true, you are not a nobody. He wants to give you direction and security.

The New Testament teaches this as well. In Luke 15, they are trying to figure out what Jesus is doing, he says, I came to pursue, to seek and to save the lost. He said physicians don't come for well people. I came for messed up people. I came for drug addicts. I came for perverts. I came for liars and stealers. I came for people with dysfunctional backgrounds. I came for people that all society thinks are an F, I came for them, and for all the people who thinks they are A's if they are willing to admit they are not. See, I came to seek and save that which is lost. Listen to this, here is how God describes believers in the Psalms, as the apple of His eye. Let's put your name in there. Imagine today, the sovereign God of the universe looks right at you and says that you are the apple of His eye.

Could God really feel that way about me? He more than feels that way, He is that way about you by His sovereign choice. It's not because you are good, but it is because He is good. But just to get your arms around it, here's how it works, remember around middle school or high school, or maybe even college depending on how your social skills were working, do you remember the very first time that a person of the opposite sex got interested in you? The way it works in middle school is that Betty tells Billy who is a friend of Susie that Mary is interested in you. Didn't that feel good? Most of you did not marry that person, so it wasn't permanent, but it did feel good. Why? I want to suggest that it was the first time that you had felt wanted by someone other than a member of your family. They are your family. They have to love you, right? But when this other person noticed you, it made you realize that you were valuable. You were precious. You were wanted. God is pursuing you, and you are wanted by God. You are not a nobody. You are wanted by God. The God of the universe wants you, and however much He has of you, He wants more. And He wants to give more, and He wants to be close. That's who you are.

3. The third thing that you need to remember is that God made you. Verses 13-16 (the first half),
13 For thou hast possessed my reins (you created my innermost being, my psyche, all that I am):
thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. 14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and
wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. 15 My
substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the
lowest parts of the earth. 16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect;

Those two phrases, fearfully and wonderfully made are powerful words, very strong words, one commentator says, "the best English word that we can use to get the level of what it really means, is awesome." We are made awesomely. We are the crown of creation. I mean the best sunset you've ever seen, the most beautiful sea, the most majestic mountains, they are like nothing compared to the grand creation God made. You. You are awesome. You are magnificent. You are precious. You are unique.

Think about what happens when you get cut, to heal, there is a specific way that it clots at a specific time and for a specific reason. Otherwise you would not heal properly. It is amazing the way that we were designed. God isn't just talking about our bodies here though, David talks about our inner most being, your psyche, your dreams, your passions, how you process information, your ways, God made you, your DNA, both spiritually and physically unique to you. When He made you, He broke the mold. Here's what I want you to jot down. You are awesome in God's sight. (Talk about the concept of identity from the marriage retreat.)

Do you realize there are a huge percentage of Christians that don't really like themselves? We spend a huge amount of energy wishing we were like somebody else. So, we figure out ways to do that. It's almost classic. It's almost like you wish you could come down from Mars and look at the world. This group of people think that you should drive this kind of car, wear your hair this way, buy these kinds of clothes and shop there. That's in. There's this other group and they think, oh no, that's preppy and materialistic, so they buy really baggy stuff, shop here, shop here, and shop here and call themselves different. This group says you have to live over here and do that, the other group says no, you have to live over here and do something else.

The mirror that we look in is the world system, the cosmos as the Bible calls it. Do you know who is the ruler of the world system? The great liar. Do you know what his goal is? His goal is to get you to look in the mirror every day and not like what you see and try to be someone else, because until you like you because you are made by God in His image, and because you bring something unique to the table, you will spend all of your life wasting all of this energy trying to be something that you aren't. You will try to be acceptable to them. I have still haven't found them. Who are they? What they think? They don't exist. And so, we mindlessly buy what we don't need, dye, color, inject, reframe, workout, trying to be a somebody, when you are already a somebody. The person that counts the most looks at you, and I'm telling you from His word, you are precious in His sight. You are awesome.

Now, I don't mean to make light of people who have really experienced terrible things. I pushed this point to an extreme because I wanted you to see it. I understand that you can grow up in a home and people can tell you that you are a nobody forever, and it's hard to shake that. You can be abused, you can go through rough relationships, you can be in difficult times, and you

can be in a world system where everyone is telling you that if you don't look like this, if you aren't that smart, if you can't do this and you can't do that, that you really are a nobody. I understand there's a massive world system knocking on your door saying you really are nothing, and then you come into the church a couple of times a week to hear preaching and teaching that says, you know, you really are someone. It's not working. We must renew our minds with scripture. The Word of God will transform your life. Romans 12:2 says, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." I have pounded on this one a little bit because ultimately you will not realize in your heart and mind that you are precious and awesome in God's sight unless you believe what the Bible says is true instead of what the world says is true, and until you do, you are a slave. And it breaks the heart of God.

4. The fourth thing that you need to understand is that God has a plan just for you. Isn't that exciting? Not only are you wanted, not only are you understood, not only are you awesome in His sight, but He's got a plan, it's a specific plan just for you. When He created all of the universe in His infinite wisdom, He had a plan. Now, you don't have to follow the plan. You can stiff arm God. You can say, look, I know that you know all things, I know you are orchestrating this for your divine purposes. I know you love me, you care for me, you died for me, and that you have all power, and you can produce all things and if you are a good God that your plans must be Good.

But you can say, I'd rather do my own plan, my own way, trust my limited knowledge, do my own thing, but at least I get to stay in control. It's called pride. God has a plan that you don't have to cooperate with, but it's better if you do. Notice what it says in verse 16 (part 2) and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

So, God knew absolutely everything that was going to happen on every single day of your life before you were even born. Isn't that wild? We are all free moral choosing agents, but before we make our choices, He knows what each of those choices are going to be. All the days ordained for you, before you came to be, He knows the beginning to the end, and yet, in His sovereignty, every choice or decision that you make matters and has significance.

He goes on to say in verse 17, How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!

He not only has a plan for you, but thousands of times each day, your name, and pictures pop into the divine mind of the eternal God, and because He is infinite, He loses no energy to have a thousand thoughts about every person in this room and all over the globe simultaneously. He is not a bigger one of us. He is totally other. He created all there is, and there are all these people, but He is thinking about me, He is orchestrating my life. He cares about me. I am wanted. Yes, yes, and yes. Isn't that amazing?

18 If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee. Notice what it says here in verse 18. The plan isn't just now, for this life. It begins when you are born, and then you die, and you awake, resurrection. He says, I'm still with you. God has an eternal plan for your life. You are indispensable to God. Theologically, that is incorrect.

Just by the nature of who God is, He never needed anything in the Godhead, He is self-sufficient. He needs nothing or no one, but He created you, and made you the object of His affection. In his divine plan, you are indispensable. In other words, his plan factors in every single person in this room, and His plan for the universe and your life are intertwined.

Let's do a little word picture for a second. There are some people that were probably tracking on a lot of what I have already said, but some may be saying you really expect me to believe that I am indispensable to God? I'm not sure that I buy that. I mean I don't feel indispensable in my own little network let alone to the God of the universe.

I am not a handy man. My wife will certainly let anybody and everybody know that she has used my drill more times since we have been married than I have. I'm ok with that. God didn't bless me in that way. But I know most of you can think about a time when you were trying to put something together, and you had most all of the big pieces fitting together. You get right to the end and realize that you didn't have a tiny little screw, and because that screw is missing, it has messed the whole thing up, and it won't work correctly. That is how we are. We think that we don't matter. How much does that one little screw effect that entire appliance? It doesn't work without it.

You know what, God has a plan. His plan for His church, His plan for doing things in your family, for doing things where you work. You know what? Every single part matters. You matter. You must find your spiritual gift. You must find where and how to get involved in your local church body. You must find the you that He created to be a vessel to love and care for other people. If you don't, will God get it done? Of course he will. You are not going to Shanghai the plans of the eternal God. But will He do it in the way that He originally intended? No. Because you are indispensable and are a part of His plan.

There is a problem here, and we will highlight it really quickly. The first one is that some of you haven't signed on. In other words, you haven't invited Christ to be the Savior of your life. You haven't said that you want God to accomplish His plan through you. God is never pushy. He's a gentleman. He's sensitive. He has high regard. He has so much regard for your will and your choices that you can say no over and over again. He even created a plan to where you can say no to Him for eternity. You don't have to be with Him. You don't have to follow His plan. But that comes out of His respect for you. If you want to be a part of His plan, you have to ask Him to be your Savior. See, all these things are true, but we have a responsibility. It's to respond by faith and ask Christ to be our Savior. Then you tell Him you want Him to be the CEO of our life because we can't do it on our own, and He knows everything, and His plan is better than our plan.

Here's the catch, even when it doesn't feel like it's a good plan, we follow it by faith. We understand that there are seasons of sowing and seasons of reaping. We understand that it may not feel good all the time, and I understand that my allegiance is for you. Everybody will have times where we feel like a nobody going nowhere, but you can't bail out of the process.

5. In fact, in the final point, David will make a very drastic response. He's going to say that God has this plan for everyone and you need to respond, but what He is also going to say is that there is a cosmic conflict at war in the world and at war in your heart to keep you from experiencing a

God who knows you and understands you, to keep you from experiencing how much he wants you and is pursuing you. There is a cosmic conflict that keeps people from doing it God's way, and we know from last week, that when you don't do it God's way, it leads to death and destruction. He's got a great plan, and it's not always popular or politically correct, but it is divine and it is good. So, when David begins to see the great truths that the Spirit of God has revealed, now in verses 19-24, he responds with a prayer that feels very angry. It is zeal. What he is going to step back and say is that all the forces are working, but I'm getting on God's side. He's affirming his loyal covenant love to God.

19 Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God (he says all these things I was just talking about, they would work except there are people and other things working against them.): depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. (these are the people that just bring death and destruction, and He's mad about it.) 20 For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. 21 Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? (that's loyalty, I'm on your team) 22 I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.

Now we read that with our New Testament eyes and our sugarcoated Christianity and think, oh how terrible. I have news for you. You ought to hate some things that are evil. I know, hate the evil but not the evildoer, but if there is some point in time in the judgment of God when evildoers will not repent, we should align against them. That's what David is doing. My heart's desire is that evil people would repent and turn to Christ. But all over the globe there are bloodthirsty people, people abusing kids, people killing tens of thousands, people that rob the food out of people's mouths for money and children will die of starvation. I'm telling you now that God is against them, and we should be against them as well. Doesn't make good, nice, lovey-dovey Christian teaching, but it's biblical. There are some hard truths in the bible that we want to overlook sometimes out of a matter of convenience.

You don't need to think that this is a holier than thou moment. This is David saying that he is loyal to God's purpose and willing to pay the price. Look at verses 23 and 24. David is not starting with somebody else, he's starting with himself. 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: 24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Do you hear what he's praying? He's saying, God I haven't arrived. God I know now that you know me and understand, God I'm grasping that you really want me, that you are pursuing me. I'm precious and awesome and you have a plan just for me. God, search my heart. I know that I can't experience this unless I'm following the everlasting way instead of the other way, the way of pain.

Let me ask you, which way are you following? You are a somebody. If you are a Christian, you are going somewhere. You have a choice to make. Experiencing God when you feel like a nobody means that you turn to Him with all your heart. You ask the penetrating questions, and you say God, I surrender my agenda to you. I choose today to believe that I'm wanted. I choose to believe that I'm understood. I choose to believe that I'm precious in your sight. I choose to believe that you have a plan for my life, and I am indispensable. Now, God, I choose today by faith to follow you with all my heart. You show me what that looks like. You do this, and you will never be a nobody going nowhere. You will experience what it feels like to be somebody.

Will it be easy? Absolutely not. Will it be rewarding? Yes. Will it bring glory to God? Yes. Will it involve some hard, painful early decisions? Yes. What's the alternative? Where are you going with your life? (Have song leader come for invitation)

Everybody has some times where they feel like a nobody going nowhere. And some people end up little by little creating a world where they are the victim. They talk about what happened in the past and where they've been, and the raw deal they got and who walked out on them, and the unfortunate circumstance, and the job that they lost. You know what? It's a fallen world and really bad, difficult things happen to everyone. The only issue that you can control is your response to those. Now how are you responding? When things go bad, when they are difficult, when we start inwardly focusing, we get a victim mentality, and then we feel like a nobody going nowhere, and then we begin to isolate ourselves and then our perspective gets narrow, and we begin to lose sight of how valuable we are to God, and that He actually has a purpose for us, and a purpose for what we have been through.

I am going to give you a little checklist here. This is where the rubber meets the road. If you want to turn from a victim to a victor, if you want to have some friends, if you want to be connected, if you want to have life and purpose:

1. Own the responsibility for your own life. No one is going to change it. God wants to help you, but you need to draw near to Him. And His promise is that He will draw near to you.
2. You can't do it alone. It's impossible. Trying hard doesn't work. Trusting deeply does. Trust comes from truth. Truth comes from the Bible. You have to get in God's word. You have to read it. It will give you hope. David said that if Your word had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. You need the truth, but you need the truth in community. God wants you to have a relationship with Him and with His people.

As we close today's lesson, we have heard some powerful things from God's word. Things that are easy to hear but hard to actually believe. I want to review 2 things. I want you to listen as if you were the only person in the universe.

1. God knows you. He understands you. He understands the hurts. He understands the baggage. He understands the pain. He knows the parts of you that you don't like. He understands when you try and blow it. He understands every aspect of you. He is for you. He's not down on you. Would you let that register deep down in your soul? He knows all about you. So, just give it up. Raise the white flag. Quit trying to perform, quit trying to hide. And just say, ok God, if you know everything, you see the good, the bad, the ugly, say God I need help. I don't feel like an anybody. I feel like I don't matter.
2. He doesn't only know you, but He is pursuing you. You are hearing this now because you are being pursued by the God of heaven. He wants you to hear what the scripture is saying. This is the truth of God's word, you are awesome in His sight. You are valued. He is coming after you. It's like that time when you saw that boy or girl across the hallway in middle school and you've never had a date, and you started to pursue them and thought someday that maybe you would get to have lunch with them. You begin to have an intentional pursuit of another person because you are attracted to them. That's how God feels about you. Stop. Quit running. Let Him catch you. Ask Him to help you. Get this into your heart and mind. He knows you. He's pursuing you, and in His eyes, just the way you are, you are

awesome. In your eyes, you may think that you are a nobody going nowhere, but according to God, you are a somebody needed for something. He wants you to know that, and if you don't, please come and talk to Him about it. If you feel like a nobody going nowhere, please come. Let Him tell you the truth about who you are and how He feels about you.