

I. Introduction

A.

1. Sermon Bumper Video :: A Psalm for Every Season: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQBModG5LaY>

2. Have you ever been *ghosted*? If you are using one of the popular dating apps or websites to meet someone I'm sure you know what it means to be *ghosted*. But if you've never heard of that word used in that way you might be thinking it has something to do with Patrick Swayze and Demi Moore's 1990 movie *Ghost*. It doesn't. Even though *ghosting* is a phenomenon that has been happening in social and professional settings, it has become easier to do with social media and electronic communication.

3. *Ghosting* is when you've been in contact with someone and suddenly, without explanation, they cut off all communication, and like a ghost disappear as if they never existed. *Can everybody say, "Rude!"*

a. One therapist said, "*When a person 'ghosts,' they are non-verbally communicating to you that they are not interested, or unsure at best.*" Silence is a 'turbid' way to let someone know you are no longer [interested in continuing the friendship]. In fact, part of the reason ghosting is so frustrating is that there are no specifics! The person on the receiving end is left wondering if things are totally dead and if so, why?¹

4. But have you ever felt ghosted by God? Things have been on point between you God and suddenly one day you're feeling disconnected, out-of-pocket, and when you ask what happened...silence. *Where are You, God?* It's almost like He is hiding, avoiding, or for some mysterious reason withholding His presence. Praying seems pointless. Worship feels wasted. Spiritual practices (like bible reading, meditating, giving, gathering, and fasting) lose their meaning. What happened? What changed? Has God ghosted you?

5. I remember exactly what it felt like the first time I thought that God had distanced Himself from me. Now you have to understand that when Jesus came into my life when I was 17 when I trusted Him to forgive my sin and make me right with God, it was a radical upheaval of my life in which God ripped me out of the clutches of darkness and thrust me into the light for Himself.

a. Because of what God did for me, I had such an overwhelming sense of grateful indebtedness towards God that I gladly relinquished myself to Him with reckless abandon. Naively I thought that the closeness I felt with Him would never go away. Until one day we *lost that loving feeling & it was gone...gone...gone. W-o-a-h.* Out of the blue, it was like He wasn't there. He went dark. It was so disorienting because there was no warning or explanation given. And the worst part of it was that I began to think that I was the problem. I felt needy. It felt like being dehydrated - like when your mouth and throat are so dry it hurts to swallow, but this was a spiritual dryness that I felt down deep to the bones of my soul. Emotionally, I was anxious and mentally distressed. Wondering, "*God, have You abandoned me? Why does it feel like You're ignoring me? Do You even care?*"

¹ <https://www.yahoo.com/lifestyle/text-being-ghosted-000000461.html>

6. Well over the past 31 years of following Jesus, I have experienced divine distance many times. How about you? Do you remember the last time you felt ghosted by God, and He seemed far away? Why does God sometimes feel so distant? Why do we go through seasons in which it seems like He is hiding from what is happening around us and to us? That is the question that Psalm 10 helps us grapple with. Read how the Psalmist expresses himself **Psalm 10:1** →

¹O LORD, why do you stand so far away? Why do you hide when I am in trouble?

7. Even though these challenging questions can be triggered by a myriad of difficult experiences the context of this Psalm frames it out for us. The Psalmist asks these despairing questions when he observes how wicked people delight in stalking the weak, preying on the defenseless, and hounding the helpless. Now that you know this, what tone do you read **V:1** with? Tell the person next you. Do you hear it with frustration? Desperation? Anxiousness? Anger? Another emotion?

¹O LORD, why do you stand so far away? Why do you hide when I am in trouble?

²The wicked arrogantly hunt down the poor. Let them be caught in the evil they plan for others.

³For they brag about their evil desires; they praise the greedy and curse the LORD.

⁴The wicked are too proud to seek God. They seem to think that God is dead.

⁵Yet they succeed in everything they do. They do not see your punishment awaiting them. They sneer at all their enemies.

⁶They think, “Nothing bad will ever happen to us! We will be free of trouble forever!”

⁷Their mouths are full of cursing, lies, and threats. Trouble and evil are on the tips of their tongues.

8. When we think of "wicked," it is easy to think of extreme examples - like dictators - Hitler, Stalin; or serial killers like Richard Ramirez, (the Night Stalker), the Zodiac Killer. But the reality is that everyday humans can be so much more subtle with their sinister plots. These days people have such a creative and sophisticated capacity for evil that its hard for some of us to even imagine. A truly wicked person scouting your neighborhood, your kid's school, a friend's small business or your church for vulnerabilities can be so slick in their duplicity that it can take years to realize how insidious they are. They are expert connivers/manipulators constantly on the prowl looking for an innocent person to exploit to get what they want.² That's the kind of person that is being described.

9. Over the past couple of years as we've seen the spread of wickedness in all its forms, I am sure we've asked God a version of these 2 questions. *Why God? Why do You feel so distant when evil seems to be winning? Who can forget the chaos of 2020? God, why do You seem to hide & allow wickedness to run rampant? Can't You see what they are doing? Are you hearing what they are saying?* So in **V:2-11**, the writer proceeds to inform God about what He seems to be ignoring – a description of the wicked person.

II. Psalm 10

[A. V:2-11 THE PROFILE OF THE WICKED](#)

² <https://www.greatbigminds.com/11-obscure-signs-of-wicked-people-you-must-know/>

1. The first thing that stood out to me about this description was the 3-times the passage mentioned what the wicked “think” about God. Their distorted beliefs about God are the root from which all the shady behavior & corrupt choices of the wicked person flow. Look at **V:4** **“The wicked are too proud to seek God. [because] They seem to think that God is dead.”**

a. I think it was the German philosopher, Fredrick Nietzsche, who coined the idea that “God is dead”. What he meant by this was that all the achievements and advancements of the Enlightenment made God unnecessary. As a result, man was crowned master of the universe and enthroned at the center of the universe. Even though we can trace many of our modern-day twisted beliefs and aberrant lifestyles to the Enlightenment, I wouldn’t say that this is where it all began. Our degradation started much earlier than the 17th and 18th centuries. Adam and Eve were the first to express that God was unnecessary when they rebelled/revolted against Him. Ever since then every human being has been affected by an internal propensity to dethrone the true and living God and crown themselves masters of the universe.

- Since the wicked arrogantly believe God is dead and man possesses the ultimate solutions, they don’t see the need for God’s intervention, direction, or wisdom in this life. They have what it takes to define right and wrong. They can figure out a way to save themselves from their troubles they don’t yearn for salvation. This lack of humility & overestimation of themselves. The first of this 5-point description of the wicked...

#1. The wicked are arrogant

*SIDENOTE: What’s amusing is that even though the wicked person is convinced God is dead, unnecessary, or does not exist, they sure do have lots of opinions about this non-existent God. Why? Because baked into our humanity is the image of God. It is inescapable.

b. Another distorted belief about God is in **V:11**, **“The wicked think, “God isn’t watching us! He has closed his eyes and won’t even see what we do!”**

- Since the wicked believe God is dead then there is no ultimate accountability to factor into their decisions. They will live as if they can get away with anything they want to do.

c. Another insight into what they believe about God is in **V:5**, **“they do not see your punishment awaiting them.”** & **V:13b**, **“They think, “God will never call us to account.”** Since the wicked believe God is dead then there will be no final judgment to consider.

d. God is dead - there is no accountability; God is dead - there is no judgment. *“I can do what I want to whomever I want and I will not be judged.”* The 2nd of this 5-point description of the wicked...

#2. The wicked are godless

2. The 3rd description of the wicked is that...

#3. The wicked are greedy

a. This is seen in **V:2** by how they treat the poor. It says they **“arrogantly hunt down the poor”** & **V:3** brag about their evil desires and plots to enrich themselves from the poor

b. Doesn't this hit close to home for us westerners? Now I don't think it is solely an American issue (it is a human heart issue) it doesn't take much for us to see this attitude towards money & possessions being practiced in our culture, especially what he says about the wicked in **V:3**, **"they praise the greedy"**

c. I think Oliver Stone's 1987 movie Wall Street illustrates this point well. Have you seen it? This is not an endorsement. It's just an illustration. The movie is about Bud Fox, played by Charlie Sheen, a young stockbroker, who becomes involved with Gordon Gekko, played by Michael Douglas. Gekko is a wealthy, high-powered, unscrupulous corporate raider who ran financial markets like he was a god. There is a famous scene in which he delivers a speech to the shareholders of Teldar Paper Corporation. Listen to what he says about greed.

- illustration Video Clip :: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVxYOQS6ggk>

- Gordon Gekko quote, *"Greed, for lack of a better word, is good. Greed is right. Greed works. Greed clarifies, cuts through, and captures, the essence of the evolutionary spirit. Greed, in all of its forms; greed for life, for money, for love, knowledge, has marked the upward surge of mankind, and greed, you mark my words, will not only save Teldar Paper, but that other malfunctioning corporation called the U.S.A."*

**Online only – If you prefer to see the clip from the movie follow the link at the bottom of the screen]*

- Doesn't that quote/clip do a great job capturing the soul of materialism? Greed is the highest virtue needed in order to be successful. This is the mindset of the wicked man/woman bragging about the systems and strategies they've designed to lure people and entrap them. Like get-rich-quick schemes, emails or chain letters claiming that someone inherited some money and randomly wants to give you some of it. They honestly believe that it is a good thing to be obsessed with always wanting more and never being content. And in their greed, they hunt for the poor, naive and mercilessly grind them to get what they want."³

d. I just got back from Florida visiting my mother for her 72nd birthday. She recently bought a car. Because it was a Kia, she showed me a newspaper article about how 2015-2019 Kais & Hyundais have become easy targets for thieves because they lack some basic auto theft prevention technology. Someone had to discover that these years didn't have electronic immobilizers, then plan how to steal them, and then go on the prowl to find one to pounce on. *Where are you God?*

e. Since she lives in an active senior community, it worries me that there are people who dedicate their time dreaming up of ways to take advantage of the seniors – scouring the internet for phone numbers, social security numbers, and emails to steal their identity and

³ <https://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-study/explore-the-bible/the-2-clear-marks-of-a-truly-wicked-person.html>

access their accounts. [P-A-U-S-E] *God, why are you hiding Your face? Can't you see what evil people are doing?* [P-A-U-S-E]

3. Like the plot of a horror film or the start of a crime thriller, the Rhoden Family Massacre in Ohio's Pike County seems unreal. Someone described it as “one of the most heinous crimes that has ever been committed in the state of Ohio”. A bitter custody battle between Edward “Jake” Wagner and Hanna-Mae Rhoden, turned into a deadly bloodbath.

Originally, the Wagner family set their vengeful sights on killing Hanna. But after she admitted in a Facebook post, that she had no intention of giving Edward custody of their daughter the target grew to include anyone who stood in their way and might be able to connect the Wagner family to the crime they were about to commit.

On April 21, 2016, in the dead of night, Billy Wagner and his two sons, Edward and George Wagner, snuck up onto the Rhoden family's property and began slaughtering eight members of the Rhoden family at four separate residences.

Christopher Rhoden Sr. was the first to die. He was shot six times in the face, once in the stomach and once in the chest. According to reports, the Wagners took him out because as the family's patriarch they feared he might retaliate against them. Other victims were Christopher's ex-wife, Dana Rhoden, and their three children – Clarence (20); Christopher Jr. (16); and Hanna (19). Clarence's 20-year-old fiancée Hannah Gilley was also killed while nursing her baby, who along with 2 other babies were left unharmed next to their dead parents.

Angela Canepa, a special prosecutor in the case said in court, “*This was not a crime of passion. This was not a fit of rage. This was not in self-defense. These murders happened after a period of three months of planning and plotting and purchasing and preparing and executing eight individuals of a family.*”^{4 5} *God where are you? Why did you allow this to happen?*

4. When I read about this it reminded me of the planning and plotting of the wicked that the Psalmist described **V:8-11** →

⁸They lurk in ambush in the villages, waiting to murder innocent people. They are always searching for helpless victims.

⁹Like lions crouched in hiding, they wait to pounce on the helpless. Like hunters they capture the helpless and drag them away in nets.

¹⁰Their helpless victims are crushed; they fall beneath the strength of the wicked.

¹¹The wicked think, “God isn't watching us! He has closed his eyes and won't even see what we do!”

5. The 4th description of the wicked is that

#4. The wicked are violent

⁴ <https://americancrimejournal.com/the-pike-county-massacre/>

⁵ <https://www.yahoo.com/news/prosecutor-lays-gruesome-details-one-150358467.html>

a. They have no reverence for the sacredness of life. They are always prowling, hunting helpless victims. The 5th description of the wicked is that

#5. The wicked are vulgar

a. **V:3** curse the Lord **V:7** the mouths of wicked are full of cursing, lies, and threats. Trouble and evil are on the tips of their tongues.

7. When the writer of Psalm 10 takes all in – the godlessness, arrogance, greed, violence, and vulgarity of the wicked he is grieved by these thugs & their cruel oppression of the poor & domination of the weak. He is horrified by their predatory behavior & how they enjoy stalking the poor, tormenting the helpless & with a clear conscience attacking those who are unable to defend themselves.

a. Did you hear/read about the 70-year-old woman from Daly City who was a victim of a home invasion? Apparently, she was watering plants on the front steps of her home when a man dressed in a utility uniform and carrying a laptop approached after she goes inside. At the same time, unbeknownst to the woman, two more individuals enter her backyard. When the woman tried to run to the front of the home, the man dressed in a utility worker's uniform breaks in, chokes her, beats her, and steals her entire life savings.

8. As he considers how twisted, deceptive & manipulative at any cost to achieve their own selfish desires it fires up a sense of justice within him. Perhaps righteous anger crashes over him like a wave and he boldly asks God →

¹⁰ LORD, why do you stand so far away? Why do you hide when I am in trouble?

a. Have you ever dared to fire off questions like these to God when you pray? Why not? Maybe it's because irreverent or disrespectful? This is why I love the Psalms and if you don't already I hope you grow to love the Psalms. There really is a Psalm for every occasion of our very real lives. And this Psalm makes a strong case that asking these kinds of prayerful questions is ok.

8. So I think one of the first takeaways from this Psalm is this: Don't be surprised by the wickedness of man. The reality is that we are wounded people living in a broken world among wounded people. This Psalm helps us grapple with those real moments & seasons of life when it seems that wickedness is prevailing, and wicked people are succeeding.

a. So what should you do when you are watching the wickedness in your city and it feels like God has ghosted you? What should you do when it seems like God is hiding His face & ignoring when someone you love is in the crosshairs of the wicked? This Psalm is telling us to pray! When God feels distant, pray! When God seems to be hiding, pray!

10. Someone who humbly accepts instead of self-righteously complaining about the brokenness of our world will know a thing or two about crying out to God in prayer. Even if that prayer begins with questioning God's presence in and awareness of the situation.

C. THE PRAYER OF THE RIGHTEOUS

1. But wait a minute! Isn't prayer a spiritual conversation? Isn't it supposed to be sacred communication between us and our creator? Isn't prayer meant to be an expression of our close connection with a heavenly Father who hears the whispers of our hearts and minds?

SO, HOW IN THE WORLD ARE WE SUPPOSED PRAY WHEN GOD FEELS FAR AWAY!?

Seems like a contradiction, doesn't it? But it's not.

2. Remember what this Psalm is. It is not just words written in someone's prayer journal, these words are the inspired - words - of - God. Think about it. As the author was composing his prayer God was actively guiding him so that when we understood this Psalm it would teach and direct us. Folks, God was supernaturally arranging his words/ actively working through him even when he was feeling ghosted by God.

3. So what was your reaction the last time you heard about someone getting pleasure from taking advantage of the vulnerability of unaware naive people? Did you hear of Elizabeth Gomes who was brutally attacked in the subway in Queens, NY by a guy who killed his grandmother when he was 14 years old? Or what about the deranged guy who followed a teenage girl into a grocery store bathroom and locked the door?

a. What should you do when you feel overwhelmed by the wickedness around you & disappointed by God's inaction? Pray. God is with you and active in you even when you feel He is not there. Even if that prayer begins with questions that express your doubts and hesitations, "God, you said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you. I am with you even to the end of the age.'" But it sure does feel like you're ghosting me. Follow the example of the Psalmist and pray when God feels distant. Pray when the wicked seem to be succeeding.

III. Conclusion

A. How should we pray?

1. But how? How should we pray? Let's continue to follow the example in **V:12-18** of this Psalm. How did he pray?

12 Arise, O LORD! Punish the wicked, O God! Do not ignore the helpless!

13 Why do the wicked get away with despising God? They think, "God will never call us to account."

14 But you see the trouble and grief they cause. You take note of it and punish them. The helpless put their trust in you. You defend the orphans.

15 Break the arms of these wicked, evil people! Go after them until the last one is destroyed.

16 The LORD is king forever and ever! The godless nations will vanish from the land.

17 LORD, you know the hopes of the helpless. Surely you will hear their cries and comfort them.

18 You will bring justice to the orphans and the oppressed, so mere people can no longer terrify them.

2. How should we pray?

#1. Pray for the wicked.

a. **V:12, "Punish the wicked."** ; **V:15, "...break the arm of the wicked...pursue them until the last one is destroyed."** Whenever the Bible mentions **the arm or the hand** as a metaphor (ie. the arm or the hand of Lord) it symbolizes the way that someone accomplishes something

b. Illustration: I've asked Hyatt Moore to help me illustrate this point because just like Liam Neeson Hyatt possesses a very particular set of skills, skills that he has acquired over a very long career. Skills that make him a nightmare for wicked people

c. When I was a teenager living in NY I remember taking public transportation to go visit a friend in NJ. To get there I had to catch the bus that would take me across the bridge from the Port of Authority downtown on 42nd street. I arrived a few minutes early and I was waiting to catch the bus 2 guys approached me out of nowhere and lured me into playing the shell game right in one of the guy's palms. They demonstrated it a few times to show me how simple it was. How could I lose? Before asking me to put up some money they even let me play a round to build my confidence. Folks, it happened so fast. Before my brain caught up with what happened they were walking away with my \$60. They were searching for someone. When they saw me. I was targeted. They laid the trap. They set me up. I got caught.

d. How should we pray for these wicked people? Pray that God would **Punish them God... break their arm** – God, neutralize/disrupt their evil plans and render them ineffective. This isn't cruel this is the most compassionate, loving, and merciful thing you can do - perhaps it is through they will repent. **#1. Pray for the wicked.**

3. How should we pray?

#1. Pray for the wicked.

#2. Pray like someone who knows God.

a. The 2 questions that Psalmist opened his prayer with exposed that even though he believed in God he was having a lapse in faith in God. And I think that in his description of the wicked in V:2-11, we were also getting a glimpse into his own uncertainties about God. "God, your silence, and inactivity is making me nervous. The wicked look at that and think that You are dead. But I'm beginning to wonder, "Are You so far removed that You can't see what they are doing?" But a shift happens in **V:12**. The dark cloud of doubt about God gives way to a loud shout of confidence in God → **Arise, O Lord!**"

- **14But you see the trouble and grief... You take note of it**

- **17...you know the hopes of the helpless. ...you will hear their cries and comfort them. You defend the orphans.**

- **18You will bring justice to the orphans and the oppressed**

b. Where does this confidence come from? What we see happen in **V:12** is that he redirects his preoccupation with the wicked and directs his attention on His God and begins to pray with confidence as someone who knows who God is (His identity) & what God does (His activity).

- The wicked think *V:11*, "God isn't watching. He's closed His eyes & won't see..."

- But you know God. You know He is omniscient. → Since that is who He is then He does see the trouble and grief; He hears the weeping of those who are hurting; He knows the desires of the hopeless ...*V:14*, even says that God makes a note of it .

- when you pray, pray like someone who knows God who sees.

- The wicked think *V:13*, "God will hold us accountable."

- But you know God. You know He is a defender → Since that is who He is then He will defend those who can't protect themselves.
- when you pray, pray like someone who knows God is a defender.

- The wicked think *V:6, "Nothing bad will ever happen to us."*
- But you know God. You know He is Since God is a just judge → then He will avenge those who are taken advantage of.
- when you pray, pray like someone who knows God who sees.

c. How about you? How do you pray? Have any of been following the series of killings that have happened in Stockton. After discovering an irregular trend in crime data, city officials noticed that the killings appear to be linked to one person and said they could possibly have a serial killer was on the loose .

d. What do your prayers sound like when you are overwhelmed by the wickedness of people? The wicked live/think how they do because they are godless. But you, you are not godless, you have a heavenly Father who cares so...

#2. Pray like someone who knows God.

3. How should we pray?

#1. Pray for the wicked.

#2. Pray like someone who knows God.

#3. Pray with the end in mind.

¹⁶The LORD is king forever and ever! The godless nations will vanish from the land.

¹⁷LORD, you know the hopes of the helpless. Surely you will hear their cries and comfort them.

¹⁸You will bring justice to the orphans and the oppressed, so mere people can no longer terrify them.

8. Just because God delays His justice doesn't mean He is denying His justice.

a. During the season where He seems to be distant, He isn't. When He appears to be ignoring evil He is not. He is like a sovereign king who reigns supreme – He hasn't lost control. He will remain in control forever and ever. Even if you disagree with His reasons, methods and timing. He can be trusted to do what is right, in the right way, at the right time because this God whom you know is entirely righteous.

He is unfolding a glorious plan that will result in perfect justice – perfect in severity for the wicked and in quality for their victims.

c. So what would your prayers sound like? Bold, confident, humble,

d. Closing comments