

Psalm 1: Attention-Grabbers

Attention grabber: A whistle blows loudly!

As you can see, this whistle does a great job of attracting attention. Suppose this whistle represents everything that pulls your attention away from God's Word and into the dark world of sin. Everywhere you go whistles are blowing—to the left, right, ahead, behind. Every time a whistle blows your head turns and you watch a while. The longer you watch and pay attention to those whistles, the more you are attracted. You soon find that tied to every whistle is something so attractive yet so wrong. You also notice that it is not the whistle that attracts you—you hate the whistle--- it is annoying! Rather, it is that enticing, pleasure-promising sin or dark plot that has your attention, and it is watching you. Just like this whistle, sin and evil are excellent attention-grabbers.

Now, I have kids. While I am watching a show on TV, they could be in their own rooms doing their own things without a care about what I am watching until—UNTIL--- gunshots, screaming, police sirens, blood, murder, and mayhem. At that precise moment, they come dashing in with big, wide eyes. It's like a magnet, there is something about chaos and people getting shot that my kids just have to see. In the same way, we all have our own dark attraction to things that lurk and cause chaos in the darkness.

[Ambiguity:] This world is full of attention-grabbers, and our attention is too-often centered on all the wrong things.

Scripture: Today we are going to take a look at Psalm 1. We will turn to the Scripture and talk about it a little later, but first I want to explain a few things that you need to see beforehand. Psalm 1 is all about the worth of attention. **It talks**

about the worth of evil’s attention, the worth of your attention, and the worth of God’s attention. Before we look at the Scripture, let me ask you a question. What is truly worth your attention?

[Analyzing Discrepancy. Storyline 1.]

The dark world of sin is constantly pulling at us, enticing us to go with it. First, let’s define sin... sin is simply disobedience to God—it is anything that goes against God. The ten commandments give a simple list of what goes with God, so just think of sin as the opposite of the ten commandments. You have heard of Adam and Eve, right? Well, we are just like them. We are attracted to the very things that God says to walk away from. When God says, “don’t touch,” we touch. When God says, “touch,” we walk away. This dark world of sin mysteriously draws us in. The more we go toward it, the further away from

God we walk. Sin has one hand stretched out toward us and the other somewhere in the darkness. The moment we take sin's hand, it yanks us into the darkness and we find ourselves sitting hand-in-hand with evil.

Sin and evil are companions. Evil loves companionship, and it is burning for you to join in on all the fun. It carries a promise of pleasure, satisfaction, friendship, laughter... it knows you desire it. When I was a teenager in high-school, I hung around friends who loved to party and get drunk on the weekends. Their lifestyle looked fun and exciting, and we laughed and laughed. I was easily taken into the wild parties and alcohol, believing that I was living the life. But instead of having a lasting joy, every part of me was burning away, leaving gaping holes that grew larger with every hung-over, morning-after. I was left empty inside.

Once evil has your full attention, it burns to ashes and scatters with the wind, taking you along with it. The lifestyle of sin seems full of promise at first, but inside the soul there is a burnt-out void full of swirling ashes. What is truly worth your attention in this world?

[Analyzing Discrepancy Cont.]. Storyline 2.

Not only does sin and evil love to attract attention, but human beings love to attract attention too. People love to be the center of attention. Even if we don't want it, we still try to attract attention because it's an inborn survival instinct present in all of us. Yes, every one of us was born with an amazingly effective attention-grabber called the cry, and we quickly learned that crying gets us what we want. According to a recent study, new moms have a universal response in their behaviors and brains when they hear their babies cry. In the study, mothers

from different countries around the world showed a pattern of picking up, holding, and talking to their babies within minutes of when their babies started crying. Babies are born with an instinct to attract their mother's attention by crying, and mothers instinctively give their caring attention to their babies when they cry. This pull of being the center of someone's attention is built into us. When left unattended, it becomes the starting point of self-gratification.

As we grow, we try to attract attention in different ways. Kids eventually stop crying but they move to other things for attention. They argue, yell, fight, hurt themselves, or run away. Some kids draw attention by striving to be really good or the best at sports, art, science, or winning the spelling bee. Getting good grades can be a way of drawing attention. Or getting in with the cool crowd at school, having the cutest date, wearing

certain brands of clothes, talking and walking a certain way.

When all of these things drive us, it feeds our self-gratification.

Now, I'm not saying that striving for or having all of these things is wrong, but the attention that one receives or gives to these things can feed the desire for self-gratification, which connects to sin. Our desire to attract attention is inherited, we were created to be this way. So, what is truly worth your attention?

[Disclosing the Resolution. Storyline 3- Reversal.]

In this world, we can see now that sin and evil are snatching up attention, and people everywhere are snatching up attention... well listen to this: God's full attention can be snatched right from heaven and straight to you. God created us to be attention-grabbers, not just for our survival, but so He can meet us personally in our deepest felt-need. Ultimately deep

inside, we are all searching to be understood and to be recognized. We are all grabbing for someone who understands us, who loves us for who we are, who guards our feelings, who protects our hearts, who laughs or cries with us, who never disappears when we need them the most. The problem is, we have focused our attention on people, places, and things that cannot satisfy the deep need inside us. Yet, there is One whose attention means more than anything the world can offer. We were created with this inborn nature to desire His attention--- to be ultimately gratified by His friendship. Jesus has one hand stretched toward you and the other hand holding eternal life. Are you willing to take His hand?

If Jesus becomes the driving force behind all you do, He cannot help but give you His undivided attention—His eyes are on you. He is ready to take you by the hand, walk with you away

from this dark world, and give you the light of eternal life that is waiting for you in His other hand. What is truly worth your attention?

[Experiencing the Gospel]

Now, let's turn to Psalm 1 and break this down from the Bible. Psalm 1 verse 1 says, “Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers.” (NIV) This blessed person has learned to ignore the whistle-grabbing-attention of the people who would connect them to sin and evil. The blessed person refuses to be fooled by those self-gratifying promises of sin that try to lure them in.

Verse 2, “But whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on His law, day and night” (NIV); Rather than giving attention to the world, this person centers their attention

on Jesus, who is the Word of God. In these two short verses, we have specific steps that we can take to help us make Jesus the driving force behind all that we do. First, instead of blindly walking into the trap of sin, we walk in step with Jesus by studying His Word. We stand in the way that Jesus took by observing how Jesus lived. We hang out with people who follow Jesus. This week, can you commit to finding a new Christian friend?

If we do this, verse three tells what will happen: “that person is like a tree, planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither--- whatever they do prospers” (NIV). This is the benefit for that person--- they become a life-giver, not a life-taker. They become like a solid tree that has spread its roots deep into the waters of God’s Word. Whatever they put their hands to succeeds. In other

words, when you are planted in God's Word, and your life is driven by your friendship with Jesus, you will not become a failure.

In contrast, verses 4-5 tells us what will happen if we give our attention to the world of sin, evil, and wicked people who lead others into darkness, saying, "Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgement, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous" (NIV). This passage warns us that the wicked are life-takers. Whatever they do turns to ashes and blows away with the wind. The wicked fall where the righteous stand.

Conclusion: [Anticipating the Consequences]

In conclusion, verse 6 shows us where God's attention rests, and it is not upon heaven or His throne--- "For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the

wicked leads to destruction” (NIV). **The Lord gives His attention to those who notice Him reaching out to them.** He watches over them, protects them, feeds them. He nurtures, restores, refreshes, and sustains their life. He gives them eternal life and causes them to stand up when everything around them is falling apart. But, the ones who ignore God’s call, who give their attention to the world’s dark, evil ways are left unprotected and are soon led to their destruction.

[New Reality:] When God’s Word, when Jesus, drives your decisions, you will grab His attention. Whenever sin is reaching its hand out to you and you refuse to take its hand, you’re blowing a whistle that God hears, and you have caught the eye of the Lord. When you have caught the eye of the Lord, you have made a connection with Him. Take advantage of that connection and see where it takes you.

Before I close, let me recap the specific steps for you to take in response to this message: First, walk in step with Jesus by studying His Word. Second, observe how Jesus lived and follow His examples. Finally, hang out with people who follow Jesus... and find a new Christian friend this week.

Now that God has your attention, let me finish with this: Psalm 1 tells us that if you take these steps, you will become an attention-grabber for God and a life-giver; everything you do will prosper; and you will have God's full, loving attention forever. Let everything you do be driven by God's Word and your friendship with Jesus. Brothers and sisters, this is truly worth our attention. Let's pray.