



THE LIVING SENT PODCAST: SHOW NOTES

EPISODE: **O40**

TITLE: **Building FOR God or WITH God? (The Psalm 127 Blueprint for Living SENT)**

Episode Summary

Have you ever felt like you're doing *all the right things for God*—and yet still feel exhausted, frustrated, or stuck? You're not alone. In this episode, Justin unpacks Psalm 127, a powerful reminder that building **FOR God** without partnering **WITH God** leads to burnout and empty striving. You'll discover how a subtle shift from striving to abiding can radically transform how you live SENT in your workplace, your family, and your neighborhood.

Discussion Questions for Teams & Groups

1. Where in your life do you feel the tension between working *for* God versus working *with* God?
2. Psalm 127 uses the phrase “in vain” three times. How have you experienced the exhaustion of building or striving “in vain” without relying on God?
3. What does it practically look like to “abide” in Christ in your daily life—in your job, family, or neighborhood?
4. Of the 10 heart-check questions from the episode, which one convicted you the most—and why?
5. Why do you think it's so easy, even for faithful believers, to slip into striving rather than abiding? What cultural or personal pressures drive this?
6. John 15:5 says, “Apart from me, you can do nothing.” How does this truth challenge your approach to your current responsibilities or ministry efforts?
7. What is one tangible step you can take this week to move from striving to abiding in a specific area of your life?



10 Heart-Check Questions: Am I Living FOR God... or WITH God?

Use these diagnostic questions to reflect on whether your life and ministry are marked more by striving or abiding:

1. Am I regularly asking God to bless what I've already decided to do?
2. Do I feel pressure to succeed because I think God is counting on *me*?
3. Do I pray more about results than about relationship?
4. Do I take on too much without seeking God's direction?
5. Do I equate busyness with faithfulness?
6. Do I feel guilty resting because it feels like I'm not doing enough for God?
7. Do I start my plans and then invite God in, rather than starting *with* Him?
8. Do I sense God's presence and guidance in the work I do each day?
9. Am I leaving margin to listen, abide, and adjust as God leads?
10. Do I truly believe that fruitfulness comes not from striving harder but from staying closer to Jesus?

Full Episode Transcript

Well, hello friends, and welcome back to the Living Sent podcast, where I help you live like an everyday missionary, right where you are, whether that's in your neighborhood, your workplace, your household, or your city. This podcast is here to encourage and equip you to live *science Sent*. Let me ask you a question. Have you ever felt like you were doing all the right things for God, and yet somehow you still felt exhausted and frustrated, maybe even discouraged, like you're pouring your energy into building something, whether that's your family, your ministry, your career, your calling. But deep down you're wondering, why does it still feel so heavy?

I've been wrestling with something similar, and today I want to go there with you. Not from some theological ivory tower, but from the trenches, as somebody who is living in this tension, wrestling with it, learning to trust God in a deeper way. This episode is not just about how to build something meaningful. It's also about learning how to build it with God instead of just for Him. And that small shift, that tiny little preposition change makes all the difference.

One leads to striving exhaustion and burnout, while the other leads to rest, joy, and fruitfulness. Let's get into it. Okay, as we get started here, our text is Psalm 127. We're only going to read the first two verses. This is the word of God.



It says this unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain. In vain do you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat. Eugene Peterson, in the message translation, says it like this. You work your little fingers to the bone and it ends like this.

For he grants sleep to those whom he loves. So did you catch the repeated word? Three times the psalmist uses the words in vain says in vain do you build, in vain do you guard in vain do you basically hustle from sunrise to sunset? And that word vanity carries the idea of something being empty. It's hollow.

It's useless. It is wasted effort. Now, context matters. And the author of this psalm is Solomon. And if anybody was qualified to talk about building or protecting something, it's him.

His resume is just absolutely stacked. Think about this. He built the temple of God. Check it out. First Kings, chapter six, one of the most magnificent construction projects in history.

He built his own palace. The following chapter took and it took almost twice as long as the temple did. He he expanded military outposts and he fortified C. You can check that out in 2nd Chronicles, chapter 8. And he also launched Israel's naval fleet in 1st Kings, chapter 9.

This man knew what it meant to oversee massive building projects. He knew the stress that came with leadership. He knew the weight that comes with responsibility. And yet, what does he say? He says, unless the Lord builds, unless the Lord guards, it is all in vain.

Even with all his wisdom, all his resources, all his manpower, all his influence, Solomon came to realize something critical. Human effort without divine partnership is ultimately empty. Now this psalm confronts a tension that every follower of Jesus feels, especially for those of us trying to live sent. You can either live your life for God or you can live your life with God. Here's what I mean by both.

Living life for God looks like striving and hustling and performing and achieving results and trying to control outcomes and anxiously managing results, things like that. While living life with God looks vastly different. It looks like abiding and resting and collaborating with the Spirit, trusting God for both the process and the outcome. And here's the thing, this is so, so subtle because at first glance, both approaches look and sound spiritual. Both are busy, both are working, both seem committed.

But only one flows out of intimacy and really the other flows out of insecurity. And I'll be honest, this is not theoretical for me. I have felt it very deeply this year. You know, last year at our church, we had



what felt like an incredible year. God surprised us.

He moved in ways we never expected. It was one of those stand back and look what God has done you years. But this, this year, things are very different. Things are moving at a very different pace. They seem harder at times, frustrating at times.

And do you know what my reflex was, my knee jerk reaction? It was, I just need to work harder, man. I just need to hustle more. I need to find the right strategy. I need to read a new book, listen to the latest podcast.

Maybe I need to get involved more and manage things better. But as I was wrestling through that, God was whispering through this psalm. Justin, I hope you realize that the way you're working betrays the way you say you believe. I work. I had to come back to the gospel truth that in Christ I am invited to be a part of what God is doing.

But ultimately, he's the builder, he's the protector, he's the shepherd, he's the multiplier, not me. And you see, this isn't just a psalm principle. This is actually a kingdom principle. This is what Jesus was talking about in John, chapter 15, verse 5. He said, I am the vine, you are the branches, if you remain in me and I in you.

You will bear much fruit, for apart from me, you can do nothing. Did you catch that? He says he didn't say not less fruit, not minimal progress. Not it will be harder. No, he said nothing.

The fruit you and I long for in our homes, in our workplaces, our neighborhoods, our mission field is directly tied to our connection to Jesus. So I want to offer you 10 simple but very challenging diagnostic questions to help you discern. Am I living just for God or am I actually living with God in my day to day life? Here are the 10 heart check questions. Okay, here's number one.

Am I regularly asking God to bless what I've already decided to do? Here's Number two. Do I feel pressure to succeed because I think God is counting on me? Number three. Do I pray more about results than about my relationship with him?

Number four Do I take on too much without first seeking God's direction? Number 5 Do I equate busyness with faithfulness? Number 6 Do I feel guilty resting because it feels like I'm not doing enough for God? Number seven Do I start my plans and then invite God in rather than simply starting with him? 8.

Do I sense God's presence and guidance in the work I do each day? Number nine Am I leaving margin to listen, abide, and then adjust as God leads? And number 10 do I truly believe Do I truly



believe that fruitfulness comes not from trying harder, but from staying closer to Jesus? If you're anything like me, some of those hit a little too close for home. But I think that's a really good thing.

So friend, if you are realizing right now, man, I have been striving. I have not been abiding. You are not alone. Here is the good news. The gospel is your invitation to rest.

Jesus is the builder. Jesus is the guardian. He's the overseer and the shepherd of your soul. And that means the pressure is off. You don't have to manufacture fruitfulness.

You don't have to sustain what God has started. Your job is not to make things happen. Your job is to stay close to the one who does. Psalm 127, verse 2. It says, he grants sleep to those whom he loves.

He gives you rest. In other words, rest is a spiritual discipline. Rest is an act of trust. Rest, says God. You are the builder, and I trust you.

So today, as you step into your workplace, your neighborhood, your family, or wherever God is sending you, remember this you are sent, but you are not sent alone because God is already at work where he is sending you. You are not responsible for the outcomes. You're responsible for obedience. So take a deep breath in and out. Let God do the heavy lifting.

Build with God, not just for him and go Live Sent hey, before you turn this episode off, I want to challenge you with one thing. I want you to pick one of those 10 questions, just one of them, and sit down with it this week. You know, pray over it, journal about it, talk to a friend or mentor about it, and ask yourself, what would change if I shifted from working for God to working with him instead? If you want a review of those questions, you can get those from downloading today's show notes for free at my website. It's its@justinwester.com navigate to the podcast tab and you can download them right there for free.

I would love to hear about how God is helping you this week to Live Sent. Maybe if you have a story to share or even a prayer request, something I can pray for you about. I'd love to connect with you this week. Send me a message and I'll be sure to follow up with you until next time. I always sign off like this.

You don't have to Live Sent. You get to we'll see you next month.