Signal vs Noise: Stirring Up a Sincere Mind vs Scoffers Be Scoffing

2 Peter 3:1-7 | July 19 - Dan Lane

Intro: Signal v Noise

In the 1940s, an engineer named Claude Shannon developed and coined an engineering and information concept in regards to communication. He called the theory Signal vs Noise. It describes the challenge of extracting meaningful, useful information (the signal) from irrelevant, distracting, or distorting interference (the noise).

More recently, Mr. Wonderful himself, Kevin O'Leary, has reintroduced the concept but made it applicable to the business world. When listening to pitches on the Shark Tank, he didn't care about your story, your passion, your dreams or the hype. That was noise. He would cut through the sales pitch and ask for the only thing that mattered to him…How much money am I going to make?

For O'Leary, cash flow is the signal. Everything else…noise.

As a broad description…

- **Signal**: The clear, valuable, truth-bearing content that helps you understand reality, make wise decisions, or move toward a desired outcome. It carries real meaning and direction.
- **Noise**: Everything else — random fluctuations, distractions, emotional static, misleading data, irrelevant details, or deliberate distortions that obscure or drown out the signal. Noise doesn't have to be false; it can be true but low-value, overwhelming, or out of context.

We live in a world full of noise. Noise permeates every aspect of our lives. It's everywhere. TV, radio, earbuds, work, text, email, billboards, even in public restrooms there is no…rest. And the noise we can't hear, we read. All of this external noise…audible and literary…drones on and on. Seemingly unending. But even if all of that were to be silent, if we could somehow find a mute button, we have our own…internal noise. Those voices from our parents, from loved ones and bullies, from teachers, from bosses - good and bad, and our own internal voice that all morphs into a constant noise that informs our identity, our beliefs, our decisions, how we think, what we think about…all of it. In our world today, it's hard to escape the Noise.

Noise can be very distracting. I'm partially deaf in my left ear. Have been for a long time. About 75%. And after my stint with covid, I have constant tinnitus in my right ear. At times, it is just a dull high pitch and other times it is an all-consuming piercing tone. So, when I'm in a crowd of just about any size or a large room and I'm trying to hear the person talking to me, I'll turn my good ear toward the speaker so I can hear their voice rather than the voices around me. In order for me to really hear, I have to turn my ear toward the voice I'm trying to listen to. I have to do what I can to reduce the noise and listen for the signal.

What I'm really trying to do is maximize the **signal-to-noise ratio** — amplifying what matters and ruthlessly minimizing or ignoring the rest (especially the tinnitus).

You may not experience it the same way I do but I'm willing to bet that you, too, live in an environment of extreme noise…**information overload**. Overcome with noise. Screens, people, kids, radio, programs, bosses, parents, billboards, social media - all of it - clambering to fill your ears, telling you this or demanding that. The result? Decision fatigue, anxiety, confusion, and weakened focus. Do you feel that at times?

While we may have never thought of this Signal vs Noise concept before; It is not, however, a new concept to the Apostle Peter. He did call it something else entirely.

We've seen in Peter's first book that they were going through some pretty intense trials and were suffering as a result. That was one source of noise Peter and his audience experienced and we ourselves have experienced. Today, we're going to look at another source that we also have experience with.

Let's take a look at 2 Peter 3:1-7. But first, let's pray and ask God to help us hear Him clearly this morning.

II. Unpacking the Text

Let's look at 2 Peter 3:1-7

"This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.' For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, 6 and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. 7 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly."

I want to spend some time unpacking what Peter was writing to his beloved family of exiles and see what God might have for this family of beloved exiles…

I. The Purpose of Pete's 2 Letters - Stirring Up a Sincere Mind

3 This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved And now you know why it's called 2nd Peter because he calls it his 2nd letter. (mind blown, let's pass the offering plate around again!)

Notice the term "beloved" used again. An intentional reminder of the affection he has for them. Think of someone you know that's in a season of struggle and you're overcome with compassion for them. Spiritually, Peter is putting his arm around them so that he can be heard well and when you get called beloved, you listen differently. You know this is not a normal conversation. This is something special and you better listen differently. Maybe we should too…

In both of them I am *stirring* *(awake fully, arouse, pushing buttons, agitating)* ***up your sincere*** *(genuine, pure, tested by sunlight)* ***mind*** *(disposition[temperment], deep thoughts, understanding - the deep core of who you are, how God wired you)* ***by way of reminder (****recollection, mindfulness - intentional awareness and thinking about and reasoning through, not just simple recollection of facts****),***

We have the reason Peter writes both letters: to stir up their sincere mind by way of reminder. He is agitating their genuine, sun-tested understanding and disposition by calling them to intentional for a purpose remembrance and recollection.

A sincere mind is the very definition of being "faithfully present".

II. Remember and Be Very Mindful - Prophets|Jesus|Apostles

2 that you should remember (be very mindful - engaging what you already know to be true) **the predictions** (spoken before, said already) **of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles,**

Remember, like "***way of reminder",*** carries more than just simple recall. It's more akin to what we call mindfulness: the practice of anchoring your awareness of known facts to the present moment. It involves being very intentional in your thinking, what the Bible calls in 2 Cor 10: ***5*** *We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and* ***take every thought captive*** *to obey Christ,*"

And as I said, it's more than just recall of a fact, it is applying truth and understanding and informing your thinking process. It would do no good to remember something true about God and then to go on acting as if that thing weren't true. So we are to remember, be mindful, in such a way that it stirs up our mind and informs our thinking and that in turn informs our actions.

So what then, are we to remember that our mind should be stirred up? The predictions of the prophets and the commandment of the Lord & Savior through the apostles. (And by way of inference, others who testify of the commandments)

We learned a few weeks ago that prophecy is not by the will of man but from God. So when you see "the predictions of the prophets" think "this is God's word". So, by implication…the Old Testament. And while the context implies prediction referring to the return of Christ it would also include the whole of the Old Testament. But not just that, but also, the commandment of the Lord and Savior. This means the Gospels which attests to God's Son, Jesus. And also what has been delivered by the apostles who were gifts given by the Spirit to inform the Church. And we know that the gifts given by the Spirit to the Church are also God's people. These later two comprise the New Testament…and more…

Do you see the trajectory? He was calling them to be stirred up with a sincere mind by remembering God's word, God's son and God's people.

We must…we GET TO…stir up *our* sincere mind and remember all that the prophets have predicted, the very life and testimony of Jesus Christ and the word of the apostles as they proclaimed the commandment of the Lord and Savior and what we ourselves have seen and attested to, since we are the continuation of the work that Christ and the apostles began.

Peter writes to “stir up your sincere mind by way of reminder.” Let me be clear, the primary weapon against hostility and false teaching is ***remembering*** what God has said through the prophets, apostles, and the Lord Himself.

Why is it so important that we remember what God’s word, God’s Son and God’s people say? Why must we stir up our sincere mind to remember these things? Because if we don’t intentionally remember…we ***forget***. And forgetfulness leads to scoffing. Look at V3…

Scoffers be Scoffing

III. Scoffers Be Scoffing - Biased Intentional Sinful Desires

3 knowing (to know absolutely) **this first of all, that scoffers** (derider - did God really say?, false teacher with false thinking, mockers) **will come in the last days with scoffing** (showing contempt, a dismissive attitude, blowing off, or making less of)**, following their own sinful desires** (that which is forbidden, own desires)**.**

The last days will feature scoffers who mock according to their own sinful desires. ***Their desire to live in sin with impunity drives them to deride biblical truth and those who believe it***. Now next week, we’ll learn why the “last days” have lasted a few…thousand years. But do not think that we are NOT in the last days just because this letter was written about 2000 years ago.

When you fail to remember, to stir up a sincere mind you are choosing to forget and forgetfulness leads to scoffing. Don’t be a scoffer. Don’t forget!

Here’s the reality: Scoffers be scoffing. That’s our smarty word: BE - officially the shortest smarty word now (get outta here with that qua stuff!)

BE = omnipresent. Scoffing has been happening, scoffing is happening and scoffing will be happening. It will not stop in this present age. Scoffers be scoffing!

Notice something here: Sinful desire - the desire to sin - leads; then scoffing follows that desire.

So…what are the scoffers scoffing about? What evil desires are they deliberately following?

IV. The End is Coming - A Day of Judgment and Destruction

4 They will say, “Where is the promise (pledge**) of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” 5 For they deliberately** (willingly, delight in) **overlook** (lie, hide, forget, ignore) **this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, 6 and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. 7 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up** (kept, amassed) **for fire, being kept until the day of judgment** (tribunal, justice, accusation, condemnation, damnation) **and destruction** (perdition, perish) **of the ungodly.**

All the way back in the Garden the Fall started with just a question: Did God really say? And now in Peter’s day, scoffers be scoffing with just a question: “Where is the promise of his coming?” But it’s not really *just* a question, is it?

These scoffers deliberately overlook the fact that God did intervene—both when He created the heavens and the earth by the word of His mouth, and when He judged the world with water so that it perished. The passage portrays their skepticism not as honest inquiry but as a willful choice to follow their own desires, while ignoring God's past acts of creation and judgment—and therefore His coming final judgment—along with God's Word, God's Son, and God's people.

The scoffers aren't inventing new objections; they're repeating an old rebellion against divine authority. It's truly a tale as old as when time began. Peter reminds them not to be surprised by what scoffers do since it never stopped since the Garden. There is a desire to sin that leads to deliberate forgetfulness. So Peter calls them to stir up their sincere mind by way of intentional mindfulness of God's Word, God's Son and God's people.

The alternative: There is a day of reckoning and judgment that is coming for unrepentant scoffers, and their place is reserved for them. History will not go on forever; the end is coming.

Those faithfully present exiles were to not to be surprised by hostility; but to expected it. They were not to be shaken by delay; but trust the word. They were not to be conformed to the present age; but to live holy and godly lives waiting for the new heavens and new earth - which we'll hear more about next week..

The scoffers were not neutral skeptics—they were hostile, following their own sinful desires. Their core attack is on the promise of Christ's return and judgment ("Where is the promise of his coming?"). Peter reminds his exiles to endure a world of scoffing; not by arguing harder but ***by remembering better!*** Faithful exiles intentionally live in a posture that is stirring up a sincere mind by way of remembering God's word, God's son and God's people.

So what? What do we do with this?

III. From the End to the Beginning

Let's begin with this: "Where is the promise of his coming?" We don't ask this question in our day, but do we live like we question if Christ is coming back?

There is an end coming, believe that! A day of judgment and destruction. Don't fall into the trap of complacency. Don't get into a spiritual rut.

The end is coming. That is a promise. But it is a promise with two sides and one great hope. Judgment and destruction of the wicked, to be sure. But God is patient, He is waiting to deliver on that promise so that "all should reach repentance".

This promise of coming judgment is throughout this 2nd letter just like suffering was throughout the first letter. Do not think it won't come so let's not live as if it won't come!

Judgment and condemnation are coming. But as we'll see next week, so are resurrection, recreation and glory for those in Christ! Do not forget!

Because, if we forget, if we fail to remember that Jesus really is coming back, that the promise is real, then ***we*** could become the scoffers…

IV. NOISE: Scoffers be scoffing and a lot of times they sound like…me

The great philosopher, Yota Te, the adequate said a few weeks ago…"Scoffers come from within"

Scoffing is…NOISE. In Peter's day, scoffers deliberately forgot that judgment was coming, they questioned what God's word, God's son and God's people were saying. There are those in the church today that will scoff and we do need to be wary of them but I want to point out something that we might not want to hear, that I might not want to hear…

There is always this NOISE all around us. But there is also the NOISE in us.

Am I one of those scoffers? Are you one of the scoffers?

Have we, in some of our thinking and desire to sin asked, directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly: "Did God really say?" or "Where is the promise of his coming?" And every question in between that really is just our sinful desires trying to deliberately overlook what God is saying and creates "Spiritual Discombobulation" (Longest Smarty word??)

What noise do we bring and entertain in our minds? What happens when we do? Do we sometimes find it hard to hear the Signal clearly through all the Noise?

In the secular world: Noise can cause decision fatigue, anxiety, confusion, and weakened focus. High performers (in business, leadership, science, or personal life) deliberately develop filters to maximize the **signal-to-noise ratio** — amplifying what matters and ruthlessly minimizing or ignoring the rest. Are we willing to do so in a Spiritual sense? Are we willing to ruthlessly minimize the Noise we can control and ignore the rest? Noise doesn't have to be false. I can be true but of low value, overwhelming or out of context.

The core skill we need to cultivate is **discernment** — training ourselves to recognize and prioritize Signal while tuning out Noise. And more information doesn't automatically equal better understanding; sometimes it just reduces clarity. Sometimes we need a simple message, repeated over and over until we can focus on the Signal, so we can actually hear what's being said. ***We need to turn our ear toward Jesus.***

Can we put down the screen, disengage from fruitless and vain discussions? Is there some Noise we can cut out of our minds altogether or at least limit quantities? Whenever I am going to be with a group of people, I will do everything I can to sit in a place where it is easier for me to hear, because I know the Noise can be so overwhelming.

We are bombarded by **Noise** that challenges, distracts from, or undermines confidence in the gospel. Peter doesn't pretend the Noise won't come — he assumes it will. His pastoral solution is to actively **amplify the Signal** through deliberate remembrance, stirring up old, new and the gifted ones (the church).

What are the external and internal voices that mock the promise of Christ's coming and final judgment; that say, in effect: "Where is the promise? Everything just keeps going on as it always has."

The scoffers aren't neutral (either the external or internal ones) — they operate "following their own sinful desires" and "deliberately overlook" God's Word, God's Son and God's People. Much of the Noise isn't pure inquiry; it's often desire-driven or forgetful, creating static that makes God's word seem unreliable or irrelevant.

When it comes to Noise, we need to be people that ruthlessly and intentionally minimize the Noise and amplify what matters - we need to maximize the Signal. To increase the Signal to Noise Ratio - we need the Gospel! We need to maximize our exposure to God's Word, God's Son through His Spirit and God's people who are gifted to the church as gifts "until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" - Eph 4

How? Turn our good ear toward Jesus!

V.SIGNAL - Stirring up a sincere mind

To reduce Noise and maximize Signal, we are to stir up our sincere mind by way of remembering God's word, God's Son and God's people.

Peter's antidote to combatting scoffers, the Noise, is NOT through new arguments, emotional experiences, or cultural relevance. It is **remembrance** — intentionally and repeatedly returning to the clear, apostolic truth: the Gospel - the good news of WHO God is and WHAT God does.

If Peter called his exiles to live faithfully, ignore the noise - the scoffers - by stirring up a sincere mind by way of remembrance, we, too, should stir up our sincere mind by remembering God's word, God's Son and God's people. All of which point to Christ - the Signal. The Gospel is the signal.

Peter's approach is practical discernment: what the Bible refers to as "taking every thought captive" and "having the mind of Christ".

Don't be shocked by the Noise. Get used to it!! Just don't let it control you! Like I do with my tinnitus. Don't let it drown you. Instead, **intentionally stir up** (awaken, refresh) your sincere mind by anchoring in Scripture. The Signal cuts through because it is rooted in God's character and past faithfulness, not in the shifting moods of culture or personal feelings. Turn your good ear toward Jesus. Learn to recognize his voice.

The goal isn't to eliminate all Noise (impossible in this world, impossible to squash our own noise), ***but to improve the signal-to-noise ratio*** so the voice of God through His word becomes the dominant, clear frequency in your life.

Here are a few core Signals that as a Christian I hear God speak in all my Noise. These are Signals that I've learned from God's word, God's son through His Spirit and from a host of God's people..

NOISE says: The world is chaos, full of stress and anxiety. Things don't go the way I want. If I don't act, things fall apart. Why won't people just do what I want them to??

SIGNAL says: God is Great, He is in control!

Peter repeatedly reminds suffering Christians that nothing is outside of God's sovereign plan. I need to stir up my sincere mind and remember:

1 Peter 5:6 (ESV) *"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you."*

The phrase **"the mighty hand of God"** is Old Testament language for God's sovereign rule over history (creation, flood, Exodus, all leading to an empty tomb and a risen king!). Peter says your life is also under that same mighty hand.

God is never reacting. He is governing.

NOISE says: my suffering has no purpose. I suffer as punishment for my sin, I deserve it. That I have to prove myself to God. Prove myself to others. Prove myself to…myself. It says I'm worthless or only valuable because of what I do.

SIGNAL says: God is Gracious. There is purpose to the suffering and it's not to punish me (that would be unjust of God to punish His Son and me for my sin).

I need to stir up my mind and remember that if Peter had one favorite word, it might have been grace.

1 Peter 5:10 (ESV) *"And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace...will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you."*

That phrase is incredible.

Not "the God who merely has grace."

Not "the God who merely gives grace."

The God of all grace.

Grace is never earned. You can't earn grace, you can't be good enough, you cannot do enough good works. God accepts you because of Christ's good works. It is not what you do but what Christ has done, is doing and will continue to do! You HAVE his approval. And if you have God's approval through Christ, who cares if you have the approval of others. And If God accepts you, maybe you can accept you. If God doesn't condemn you then you can't condemn you!

God's default posture toward His children is grace, not condemnation. [REPEAT THIS!!]

God also calls you "Beloved" - Dearly Loved Children!!

NOISE says: It's all about me. People should see what I do. Living for Likes and Clicks. It's pride, acknowledgment, selfies, I've been wrong, I'm owed this or that. When do I get my turn? Why do I always have to be the one to change?

I really need to stir up my sincere mind and remember that…

SIGNAL says: God is Glorious. **1 Peter 4:11***"...so that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."*

Everything points to Christ. He is the glorified one. And if Jesus can leave the splendor of heaven to live the life we should have lived and died the death we earned, I think I can be okay with not making life about…me and about my circumstances.

God's glory is greater than your circumstances. Can my response in my circumstance reflect God's glory to others?

NOISE says: I don't have what I want. I want more. I deserve more. If I don't get this thing, I'm miserable. If they get that, I'll be jealous. I'm not satisfied.

SIGNAL says: God is a Giver of Good Gifts

Peter doesn't merely say God gives gifts—he begins his second letter by reminding believers that God has already lavished them with everything necessary for life with Him. I get to stir up my sincere mind by way of remembering that…

2 Peter 1:3 (ESV) *"His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness..."*

If God has truly given us all things, given good gifts, we ought to be the satisfied and celebratory people the world sees. Especially if we remember that that best gift He has given is…HIMSELF!

[Communion table bread. Flour. Yeast. Water. Salt. Sugar.] Stir those truths up. Put those truths in the oven of your mind, soul and spirit and then devour those truths up! Taste and see how good and great and glorious and gracious the Lord is! These truths from 1 and 2 Peter will work together like a shield: the apostles' eyewitness testimony silences the scoffers, the prophets' predictions prove the plan was always God's, Christ's finished work (blood, resurrection, shepherding) assures our present standing with God, and the promised return keeps our hope fixed on the future grace that is coming. When scoffers (sometimes our own scoffings) try to plant doubt, go back to these reminders—they are exactly what Peter wrote to "stir up your sincere mind by way of reminder." Keep them fresh in our heart, and the doubts will find no lasting root.

So…what do you do when you are the scoffer? You got to stir up that mind with the God's Word (you can't remember if you don't read the Bible), God's Son (you can't remember if you're not listening to Christ through His Spirit in prayer), and God's People (you can't remember if you are not in community with the Body of Christ). You need all the ingredients and you need to stir them up together. If you don't have them all and if you don't stir it up, you get something inedible.

To combat scoffers, those outside and within, we look back and remember God's word to see what has been done. We rely on God's Son in the present tense as He is right now sitting at the right hand of the Father making intercession for us and giving us, right now His Spirit to remind us and empower us and we look forward to the day when Christ will return and make all things new. We know judgment is coming…but so is the coming of his promise. We, who are in Christ, are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. And we'll see more of that…next week!