

ONWARD

from the desk of Chris Greer

Hey there, . It's me, Chris.

This is year number 24 of my everyday relationship with Jesus. And, as my friend Billy would say, "It's been *somethin'.*"

Ups and downs. Failures and successes. Confusion and clarity. Getting stuck and unstuck. And everything in between.

But there's one constant: working hard to keep *moving onward*. It's learning to take the next step, figuring out how to go deeper and move closer. It's living into what Eugene Peterson called "a long obedience in the same direction."

So welcome to *Onward*, my 5-minute newsletter about what works — what gets us unstuck and keeps us moving with Jesus — for everyday people of faith like you and me.

I'm grateful you're here. Let's get moving. *Onward.*



quote of the week

"Dear brothers and sister, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity..."

James 1:2

Ever met someone who sees the world...*differently*?

Back when I was a pastor, I rallied a small group of folks for a service trip to Baja, Mexico. We built small, sturdy houses for people who lived under tarps. It was an eye-opening weekend.

Jorge — a 45-year-old Mexican-born carpenter with the energy and joy of a small child — served as the ministry foreman. He showed us the ropes, patiently

teaching us to frame walls and hang drywall.

On multiple occasions, one of us wielding a hammer would bend a nail beyond repair and holler out in exasperation, "Mr. Jorge — I have a problem!"

Our faithful foreman's consistent response taught a great lesson.

He smiled a knowing smile, and kindly said, "No, no, my friend. You don't have a problem. You have an *opportunity*. An opportunity to learn how to use the *other side* of the hammer!"

Then he flipped his hammer, used the claw to pull out the messed-up nail, and proclaimed, "See! An opportunity!"

I still remember how his words gave us confidence and encouraged us to give it another try.

My esteem for Jorge only grew when I heard stories of how Jorge always lived his life with "opportunities" in mind. When faced with the problem of a stranger stealing his tools, Jorge saw the opportunity to provide the man a job so he could one day afford his own tools. When Jorge experienced the problem of someone squatting on his small plot of land, he recognize an opportunity to share the gospel and his property.

We all have problems, right? I certainly do. But in Jorge's world — as in Jesus' kingdom — it's not *only* a problem. The problems you have, and the places you're stuck, are also opportunities.

Maybe the hospital visit is an opportunity to bear witness of God's love to others.

Maybe quarantine is an opportunity to learn to be still and pray.

And maybe the office-place offense is an opportunity to grow in forgiveness.

Perhaps the overwhelming or annoying children provide opportunities to develop patience and compassion.

Perhaps the cancer diagnosis is an opportunity to trust, to look forward to healing, or to see Jesus face to face.

And perhaps this spiritual dry spell is an opportunity to learn new ways to approach the Well.

This is different than just positive thinking or foolish optimism. It's bright faith. After all, Jesus is in the business of turning things around. He deals in deliverance. Redemption is what he does.

So what do we do when problems arise? How do we recognize the opportunity provided?

We remember and give thanks for all the ways God has transformed our and the world's problems into important opportunities in the past. Then we anticipate the God-given opportunities each problem affords and we engage them with all our heart, soul, mind and strength --- trusting all the while that what God has done before, he will do again.

Onward,

Chris

dad joke of the week

Why did the man fall down the well?

Because he couldn't see that well.

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6834 Cantrell Rd PMB 1479, Little Rock
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