

ONWARD

from the desk of Chris Greer



Hi . Chris here. And today is the day the Lord has made...am I right? 😊 ☐☐ I hope all is well.

So hey...Can you remember what last night's dinner felt like in your mouth?

It's a weird question, but think about it: If you can remember what you ate last night (and that's a pretty big "IF" for me sometimes), what did it feel like on your tongue? What was the texture, temperature, and taste of your cobb salad, bowtie pasta, or...Captain Crunch?

Psychologists and dieticians say that noticing the appearance and fragrance of our food *before* we eat it, and taking note of the taste and texture *as* we eat it, are keystone habits for healthy eating.

When we slow down and pay close attention to our food, we eat slower, less, and better.

I tried it all week. It's not easy.

Probably because I've spent decades eating to quell my hunger, not taste my food. And I eat too fast, treating meals like pit stops, as if my body's an Indy car and life's a race.

But, last week it hit me: *This is about much more than food.* Taking a closer look is not just a healthier way to eat, it's a better way to live.

Slowing down to pay close attention to our lives is a practice that can open us to fresh and immediate experiences with God.

Let's see how this simple but often overlooked practice helps us get unstuck and keeps us moving onward with him.

quote of the week

"Is it possible for people to miss their lives in the same way one misses a plane?"

— Walker Percy

It's easy in our technology-laden and entertainment-soaked age for our days and years to zip by with little notice.

In his novel, *The Second Coming*, Walker Percy captured it: "Not once had he been present for his life. So his life had passed like a dream."

Moving at a frenetic pace, in the numbing glow of electronic blue light, we miss the present-tense richness of an attentive life with God.

The good news is, we don't have to miss it. We can learn to look closely, listen carefully, and experience God and a lucid life *today* (rather than just shutting our eyes and white-knuckling it 'til Jesus calls us home!)

With that hope in mind, let's take our cues from Jesus' words in Matthew 6, where we see that...

The one who experiences God now is the one in the habit of looking for him.

Halfway through his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Look at the birds..." and "Look at the lilies..." Ultimately, Jesus wants to convince us that worry is a waste and that God cares for us completely.

But to reveal that extraordinary truth, he highlighted an ordinary reality.

"Look at the *birds*..." and "Look at the *lilies*..."

Two significant roadblocks prevent many folks (including me!) from becoming spiritual bird watchers and horticulturalists.

First, we tend to sacrifice a full view of eternity for a diminished view of forever. Like children who skip a delicious dinner so they'll be hungry for cake, we starve ourselves anticipating heaven's dessert instead of delighting ourselves in God's eternal meal today.

Second, we tend to believe the Bible is God's only form of communication.

Even the Word made flesh — who said "the Scriptures point to me!" (John 5:39) — pointed to God's truth revealed in sparrows and flowers (Matthew 6:25-33), grapes (John 15:1-5) and gardens (Matthew 13:1-43), bread and wine (Luke 22:14-20).

Looking at the birds and lilies is one of God's invitations to enter eternal life now (John 17:3) and recognize him through all he's created. (Psalm 19:1-4)

Observe.

Watch.

Take note.

Jesus says "pay attention" because the bird and the flower — and a myriad of other simple things and situations — serve as signs.

"The whole world is a series of miracles... but we're so used to them that we call them ordinary things," wrote Hans Christian Andersen.

Before Jesus taught us to "look," King David encouraged us to "Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:10) So my prayer for you this week is that each time you...

- ...eat a meal — no matter how magnificent or meager — you will *taste* that God provides.
- ...look around your world — no matter how bright or dark, beautiful or broken — you see that God is both Creator and Redeemer.
- ...encounter a person — regardless of disposition, personality, attitude, friend or foe — you *hear* the Spirit saying "In the image of God he created

them” and “For God so loved the world.”

- ...pause to breathe and pay attention — no matter when or where — you'll *recognize* and enjoy God in all the details of life.

So...go ahead and try it. (Yes, right now!) Here's a prompt...

What do you notice around you right now, right where you are?

Take a long moment — take a deep breath — and take note of anything and everything that draws your attention to God and brings his truth to mind.

Look. God is in every layer of life. And we don't have to miss the plane.

Onward,

Chris

RESOURCES for Paying Close Attention

The “**Prayer of Examen**” is a classic prayer practice that helps you slow down and recognize God in the ordinary events of your day. [CLICK HERE](#) for a brief description, and try it out.

Need a way to pay close attention to the Spirit of God **in the most stressful moments**? [CLICK HERE](#) to check out ONWARD issue #10.

Want a little help paying attention to God in the middle of the weekly madness? Join me for LTL (Lunch Time Lectio) - a simple, guided way to pay attention to God through Scripture.

Thursdays in July

12pm to 12:45pm

on Zoom.

[CLICK HERE](#) to get the link. Only a few spots left.

dad joke of the week

Stop looking for the perfect match.

Use a lighter.

Did you miss one? Check out past ONWARD posts at Chris-Greer.com/onward.

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6834 Cantrell Rd PMB 1479, Little Rock
Arkansas 72207 United States



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