

# ONWARD

from the desk of Chris Greer



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Hey, . It's Chris ☐☐

Do you ever visualize the future?

People from all walks of life — athletes, doctors, and artists most famously — practice visualization. They use their imaginations to “visualize” the details and outcome of a particular pursuit, project, or performance *before* they undertake it.

Rehearsing mentally enhances their ability to perform physically.

If you're skeptical, remember that folks who imagine, set, and write out their goals are much more likely to achieve them. And what is goal setting if not using your mind to imagine accomplishing something that's not yet accomplished?

**Your imagination is a powerful, God-given thing, and it can be a powerful tool in the fight against sin.**

In the [previous issue of ONWARD](#) we discovered how remembering God's love helps us in holiness. This week we'll look at another discipline (one I've found very helpful recently) to help us face our temptations and keep moving onward with Jesus.

Let's imagine getting unstuck...

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## quote of the week

“Dear brothers and sisters, one final thing: Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.”

— Paul, from [Philippians 4:8](#)

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Like you, I take the battle against my sin seriously. For God's glory, others' sake, and my joy, I want to “go and sin no more.” (John 8:11)

When I perform an autopsy on my sinful actions — that is, when I look back on my failure and consider what caused it — I typically uncover two things: a) the

environmental and personal reasons for the temptation, and b) a moment when God provided a way out that I failed to take. (1 Cor 10:13)

And that's got me wondering...

**If hindsight helps us learn and heal *after* we sin, maybe foresight can help us resist and defeat temptation *before* we sin.**

Recalling our sin scenarios leads us to holy confession and reunites us with God. Imagining our sin scenarios can lead us to holy behavior and prevent our separation from God in the first place.

Let's say a friend invites me to lunch. He's a good friend, but our conversations often turn to negativity and gossip, and I leave his company realizing I need to confess and repent for the ways I spoke of others.

I can solve this sin problem in three ways.

1. Don't hang out with him ever again.
2. Talk with him about the problem and work together to avoid sin.
3. Prepare and plan ahead so I don't sin (and I don't lead *him* to sin.)

Option 1 is unrealistic. I can't avoid friends or temptation for the rest of my life.

Option 2 is an important step and needs to be part of my strategy, but even so, it's *also* crucial that I work hard on Option 3.

And that's where a holy imagination comes in. It's a strategy to prepare and plan for our next hangout. And it's got two parts...

First, I'll pray this simple but important prayer before we get together: "God, help me to obey you and love others by not gossiping with my friend today."

Second, I'll imagine — or visualize — our meeting and conversation. I can't script it, but I can rehearse how I'll respond if/when temptation presents itself.

**I'll imagine how I *might* sin and how I can *avoid* sin so when I'm *tempted* to sin I *won't* sin.**

And if it works, it's a strategy I can use for *any* area of temptation in my life: be it pride, judgmentalism, lust, hostility, envy, selfishness, greed, or others.

I know the situations, emotions, media, or people that tempt me to sin, and if I want to take holiness seriously, I can make the effort to visualize my response to temptation long before I'm tempted.

Over time, the practice of holiness will carve the neuro pathways and behavioral habits I need to more easily resist temptation and honor God.

Want to try it with me? It's so crazy it just might work.

**It won't be easy. But sin is serious. And obeying God and living life to the full is worth every effort and attempt.**

Here's to using the imagination God gave us to live the life God has for us.

Onward,

Chris

At the job interview, they asked me, "Where do you see yourself in five years?"

I told him, "I think mirrors will still be around."

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