

# ONWARD

from the desk of Chris Greer



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Happy New Year, !

I know it's officially 2024, but I'm wondering what was one of your major highlights from *last* year?

In one of his final sermons of 2023, our pastor encouraged our church to read up on church history. Intrigued by his prodding, I began listening to Mark Noll's book, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*.

Noll points out that when we look back through history, we see the unmistakable footprints of God.

**In the pages of the past we're reminded of God's presence and power, and we perceive the truth of Scripture played out in people's lives.**

What's true of the Church is also true for *you*.

Looking back at what God's done in your past helps you be aware of him in the present and move confidently with him into the future.

So let's move onward with Jesus into 2024 by first looking back at 2023. Here's how to do it...

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## quote of the week

"We don't change from our experience, we change when we reflect on our experience."

— Trevor Hudson

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The Scriptures are chock full of the commands to "Remember!" and "Don't forget!" God repeatedly reminds us to remember. One such instance comes to us in Psalm 77.

The Psalmist who penned it was mired in uncertainty and insecurity, wondering aloud about God's goodness and love. By verse 10 he's convinced God has given up on him altogether. Exasperated, he wrote...

*"This is my fate; the Most High has turned his hand against me." (Psalm 77:10)*

But then, he remembered to *remember*, and wrote...

*"But then I recall all you have done, O Lord; I remember your wonderful deeds of long ago.*

*They are constantly in my thoughts. I cannot stop thinking about your mighty works." (Psalm 77:11-12)*

### **When the Psalmist stopped to look back, he turned a corner.**

God wants all of us to remember what he's done so we can live in gratitude and trust and deepen our understanding and certainty (See the verses and context of Deuteronomy 8:14-20, Psalm 143:5, 77:11-12, Isaiah 46:8-9, John 12:16, and 2 Peter 1:9 to name a few), and marking what God did in your past can help you grasp his trajectory for your future. (See Joshua 4 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

So, the first step for setting a course in 2024 is to recall God's activity in 2023. Here's a simple, step-by-step process to get started.

#### **First, PRAY.**

Ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate and guide this process.

#### **Second, LOOK BACK.**

A lot happened last year. Open your 2023 calendar app or planner, and ask God these questions as you remember 2023:

- What were the most significant faith, family, relationship, and work experiences of 2023?
- How do you see God's presence and activity in those experiences?
- When did you sense personal satisfaction and God's delight (even if the experience wasn't good or happy)?

Write down what you remember.

#### **Third, IDENTIFY THEMES.**

Prayerfully consider how those experiences fit together. Use these questions, if helpful:

- What themes or patterns arise in the ways God moved last year?
- How do those experiences fit together, and what insights is Holy Spirit revealing?

#### **Fourth, ASK GOD.**

Sleep on it and sit with it a few days. Carve out some moments to ask God deeper questions (like "What were you up to, Lord?" and "What else do you want me to know from those experiences?"). Pay close attention to what he says and write it down.

The next edition of ONWARD will help you take the next step and *Look Forward*. I believe there are things God wants you to know and do with him in 2024.

But for now, rest in the fact that God was with you in 2023 and he did some things that are worth remembering. Enjoy and worship him as you look back together.

Onward,

Chris

P.s. One final encouragement: **This practice (like all meaningful practices) takes a little time!** But do it. Alone, or with your spouse, kids, or friends. You won't regret it!

P.p.s. Want to dive deeper into this practice? Check out [THIS PODCAST](#) on "Remembering" from my friends at [Seek Well](#).

## BAD NEWS...

The world is crazy, life moves quickly, and we often sacrifice what's important for what's urgent. Is there a way to stop, refresh, and recalibrate?

## GOOD NEWS...

There is. Our weekend retreat experience, **STILL**, is crafted to help you slow down and experience God in a way that's real, powerful, and refreshingly simple.

### **STILL for Women:**

February 23-25 | Central Arkansas | Only 4 spots left! | [Click HERE](#) for more details and/or to sign up.

### **STILL for Men:**

Dates coming soon!

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## **dad joke of the week**

Not to brag but I made six figures last year...

I was also named worst employee at the toy factory.

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