

Why We Must Seek God's Presence in the Ordinary

On a chilly late-summer morning, my family drags me out of bed hours before it feels reasonable to wake. We're camping, and the cold, hard ground underneath our sleeping bags is too bumpy to lie comfortably for long. Birds were up singing ages before the sun rose, so my eager tent-mates saw no reason to delay the adventures of the day. Pulling on sweatshirts, we tumble out of our unzipped shelter.

But as soon as we straighten up, we're stopped in our tracks, bouncing into each other like bumper cars. Rising over the lake, the morning sun peeks over the horizon, dawning. And this is not just any sun: This orb is flaming red, turning the lake beneath it to blood. Everything around us flushes scarlet.

For two sacred hours on this crisp morning, we sit in wonder by the lake, bundled up in blankets and each other. God's creation is breathtaking and magnificent, and His presence surrounds us today and every day, inviting us to come alive and meet with Him. We can listen and awaken to it, or go on sleeping (buried under quilts and pillows, as I had preferred).

My family was wise to pay attention.

Christians wholeheartedly affirm that God is the Creator and Redeemer, the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last. We believe God was present at the beginning of time and will be faithfully waiting for us at the end of all things. But do we skip over the middle section? Do we recall that God's Spirit is here among us, daily? In addition to creating and redeeming, the Spirit *sustains* us in each moment, with each breath. We are given this life on earth in order to learn Him,

to seek and find Him, after all. God is the first and the last, yes; but also the middle, the everything in between.

But if I'm honest, most of the time I am far too distracted to even think of such things.

I live in a default state of preoccupation, unaware of anything outside the urgent anxieties of my to-do list, appointments and commitments, the demands of deadlines and expectations. It's as though I'm too far away for God's voice to reach me, too caught up in my own noises. I catch only occasional hints of His presence.

Even if I weren't well equipped to distract myself, we are disciplined daily in distraction. Always my phone is beeping, 24-hour news is blaring, information is scrolling. We're encouraged to look at and listen to almost anything else, everywhere else.

But the Creator has not left this earth He made. No, He is still here—carefully, lovingly tending His creatures, His own children. It may be hard to see Him with our lives so crowded, so full of hustle and bustle. But He is here, always; working, enjoying, nurturing every piece. It may be hard to hear Him, now that we're so enamored of our own noises. But His voice—proclaiming goodness, purpose and wisdom—continues to fill the earth.

Each and every day of our lives, we have an open invitation to see God in the ordinary moments of our days, to fellowship with the Spirit all around us. God is present in the beauty and joy, but also in the sorrow and pain. After all, He calls to us in every season—day and night, summer and winter, in the miracle of birth and at the hour of death.

Shall we come awake today and listen? Sometimes, a beautiful sunrise is all it takes to capture my attention. {eo}

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eyes to God's creative, redemptive work in each day—while caring for three kids, two jobs and one enormous garden. Catherine's first book, Long Days of Small Things: Motherhood as a Spiritual Discipline, was an ECPA finalist for New Author. Her second book is All Shall be Well: Awakening to God's Presence in His Messy, Abundant World. She's on the lookout for wisdom, beauty and iced coffee.