

The West End Herald

Second Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC



Be Still and Wonder

Two Habits for Hurried Souls

by Scott Hubbard



Sometimes, the solution to our spiritual struggles is less spiritual than we imagined. Maybe you walk in a spiritual wilderness, afflicted by distressing doubts. Maybe a dull apathy settled upon you some time ago. Maybe you live in a land where joy feels far away.

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You might imagine that the main solution to these spiritual struggles is, well, *spiritual*: hold more firmly to God's promises; draw near to him more regularly; search out hidden sins. And you might be right. But maybe, just maybe, you need to hear counsel like John Newton's (1725–1807):

Sometimes when nervous people come to me, distressed about their souls, and think that is their only complaint, I surprise them by asking if they have no friend in Cornwall, or in the north of Scotland, whom they could visit; for I thought a ride to the Land's End, or John o' Groat's House, might do them more good than all the counsel I could give them. (*Letters*, 389)

Sometimes, our spiritual struggles come not because we have neglected God's word but because we have neglected his *world*. We have walked through life wearing sunglasses and wondered at the darkness. We have lived with headphones on and questioned why we can't hear.

We may indeed have spiritual issues to address. But our first solution may simply be this: open your eyes and ears and wonder at the world God made.

Where Wonder Dies

By *wonder*, I mean a wide-eyed awareness of God's creation that leaves us hushed, self-forgetful, and brimming with joy. Such wonder quiets cares and awakens worship. It gilds ordinary moments and dignifies daily labors. It composes and calms, reminds and recalibrates, adds poetry to prose. Even a little wonder can do wonders for the soul.

But some of us rarely look through the window of wonder. We are too distracted by other attractions, even though they lend far less cheer to heart and mind. Perhaps two allure your attention.

The first is probably not surprising. On average, we Americans check our phones some two hundred times a day, or about once every five waking minutes. "With the smartphone," Nicholas Carr writes, "the human race has succeeded in creating the most interesting thing in the world" (*The Shallows*, 233). But this "most interesting thing" has a way of rendering the real world uninteresting. Life looks drab in the smartphone's glow.

You don't need to be addicted to your phone, however, to lose your wonder. Another more surprising attraction draws and keeps many for far too long. Some have called it "the devilish onrush" of the modern world; others, "the cult of productivity and efficiency" (*The Art of Noticing*, xv). Many of us really like getting things done—and fast.

People made in the image of a creative God ought to value productivity. But "the cult of productivity" is something different. Those shaped by this cult

PERU

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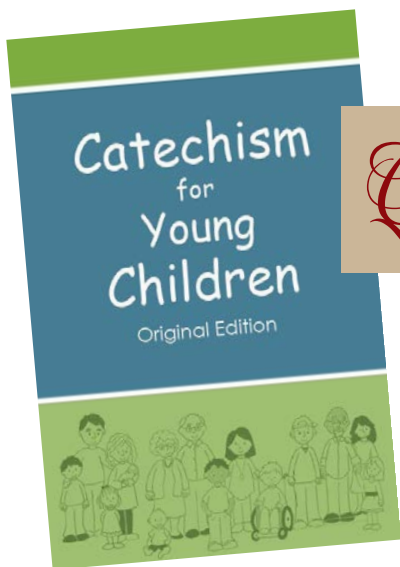
Fun Facts

Peru is one of the best surfing locations in the world.

The National University of San Marcos, founded in 1551, is the oldest university in the Americas.

The world's tallest flowering plant—*Eucalyptus*—is found in Peru.

Guinea pigs, baked until crispy, are a snack!



Question 124:

Who appointed these sacraments?

Answer:

The Lord Jesus Christ.

The word *appointed* means that Christ began these two sacraments and told us to do them. Christ appointed these sacraments to identify God's people from those people who are not Christians. God uses the sacraments to remind us that we are His people. Christians are members of God's family. God is our Father, and we want to please Him in everything we do. We should think differently, talk differently, and act differently than people who are not Christians. Sacraments, given by Jesus Christ, use physical objects that we see, taste, or touch to teach us about the Holy Spirit's invisible, saving work. Sacraments are given to remind us of God's grace. ♦



at the corner of

River &
Rhett

NEW MEMBER RECEPTION AND LUNCHEON

The church family and visitors are cordially invited to a luncheon honoring our new members.

(New members will be introduced to the congregation at the 11:00 A.M. Worship Service.)

DATE: Sunday, April 6, 2025

TIME: Following the 11:00 A.M. Worship Service

PLACE: Gymnasium

FOOD: Meat and drinks will be provided. Church members are asked to bring generous portions of sides and desserts.



marchbirthdays april

Have a great day!



- 30** Fitz King Jr., Chris Przirembel
- 1** Ford Duncan Jr., Kevin Fitzgerald, Ryan Horn, Joseph Maralit, Will McDaniel, Josiah Scott
- 2** Melton Duncan Sr., Clara Gearhart
- 3** Carole Fitzgerald, Leah McGuirt
- 4** Yessenia Barriga
- 5** Avery Johnson

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don't simply like getting things done; they dislike *not* getting things done. And so they have little patience for stillness and silence, meditation and marveling. Unproductive feels unbearable.

So then, the phone and the to-do list, entertainment and efficiency, digital bombardments and hustle-bustle busyness—often, these are the enemies that steal our wonder.

How Then Shall We See?



These enemies are also difficult to resist, even when you know what they take from you. The sight of a real mountain may seem dull compared to a

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This Week

MORNING SERMON

Dr. Richard D. Phillips

THE MAN IN THE FIRE

Daniel 3:19–4:3

EVENING SERMON

Rev. Jeffrey M. Early

I WILL AFFLICT YOU NO MORE

Nahum 1:10–15

Sunday, March 30

- 8:30 A.M. MORNING WORSHIP
- 9:55 A.M. Children's Chapel (*Sanctuary*)
- 10:00 A.M. Sunday School
- 10:00 A.M. Membership Class (*Room C-209*)
- 11:00 A.M. MORNING WORSHIP
- 5:30 P.M. Season of Prayer (*Chapel*)
- 6:00 P.M. EVENING WORSHIP

Monday, March 31

- 6:30 A.M. Men's Bible Study (*Fellowship Hall*)

Tuesday, April 1

- 10:00 A.M. WIC Bible Study (*Fellowship Hall*)

Wednesday, April 2

- 5:00 P.M. Pastoral Care Committee (*Office Work Room*)
- 5:15 P.M. WIC Council (*Conference Room*)
- 5:30 P.M. FAMILY NIGHT FELLOWSHIP SUPPER (*Gym*)
- 6:15 P.M. Hope Choir (K4–K5); Covenant Choir (Grades 1–6); Youth Choir (Grades 7–12)
- 6:45 P.M. Missions Moment (*Gym*)
- 7:00 P.M. CAT Kids (Ages 3–Grade 4); Covenant Kids (Grades 5–8)
- 7:00 P.M. Jr. & Sr. High Bible Studies
- 7:00 P.M. Adult Prayer Meeting & Bible Study (*Gym*)
- 7:30 P.M. Chancel Choir

Friday, April 4

- 9:15 A.M. Raising Up Mothers (*Fellowship Hall*)
- 12:00 P.M. Men's Luncheon and Bible Study (*Gym*)
- 1:30 P.M. Mission to Main

Upcoming Events

spcgreenville.org/calendar

April 6	New Member Luncheon
April 11	Friday Night Alive
April 12	Masculine Mandate
April 13	Baptism Sunday
April 20	Easter Sunday
April 24	Calvary Presbytery (Downtown Presbyterian)
May 14	Graduation Banquet
May 17	Masculine Mandate
May 21	CAT Kids Program
May 25	Baptism Sunday
May 28	Summer Children's Choir Begins
June 1	All Adult Summer Sunday School Begins
June 16-21	Sr. High Summer Conference (Pawleys Island, SC)
June 23-27	PCA General Assembly (Chattanooga, TN)
July 7-11	Vacation Bible School
July 21-25	Jr. High Summer Conference (Ridge Haven, NC)

2025 **EASTER WEEK** Services

SUNDAY April 13 Palm Sunday / Evening Choral Service, 6:00 P.M.

WEDNESDAY April 16 No Wednesday Night Activities

THURSDAY April 17 Maundy Thursday Service, 7:00 P.M. (Sanctuary)

FRIDAY April 18 Good Friday Luncheon, 11:45 A.M. (Gym)
Good Friday Service, 12:30 P.M. (Sanctuary)

SUNDAY April 20 Sunrise Service, 7:00 A.M. (Mountain View Baptist Church)
Mountain View Baptist Church, 111 Cagle Street, Greenville
Breakfast, 8:00 A.M. (Second Presbyterian Church Gym)
Sunday School, 9:00 A.M. (Second Presbyterian Church)
One Worship Service, 10:00 A.M. (Second Presbyterian Church)
Sunday Evening Service, 6:00 P.M. (Second Presbyterian Church)



Announcements

College and 20s Luncheon

Young adults in this Sunday School Community are invited to a luncheon in the Fellowship Hall on Sunday, March 30, after the 11:00 Service. Meat and drinks will be provided, but please bring a side dish to share.

Youth Summer Conferences

Please ask the Lord to bless these upcoming important youth events:

Sr. High @ Pawleys Island **June 16–21**

Jr. High @ Ridge Haven **July 21–25**

Sign up on the SPC website: spcgreenville.org/signup

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digital mountain—or the mountain of work we'd like to get done. Reclaiming wonder takes effort. It takes a willingness to pin down our twitchy thumbs and endure the sight of unchecked boxes as we reorient our vision to “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely” (Philippians 4:8).

I find help from two habits that draw from God's creative pattern in Genesis 1:1–2:3: Daily look upon God's world and call it *good*. Weekly rest in God's world and be refreshed.

DAILY ATTENTIVENESS

Habit 1:



At least once daily, attend, truly attend, to one of the wonders God has made.

This first habit borrows from Clyde Kilby's “means to mental health,” where he gets more specific: “I shall open my eyes and ears. Once every day I shall simply stare at a tree, a flower, a cloud, or a person. I shall not then be concerned at all to ask what they are but simply be glad that they are.”

At least once a day, in other words, find something unentertaining and unproductive, some flower that unfolds its beauty only under the sun of patient attention. Press through the discomfort of undistracted inefficiency and slow down. Look. Listen. Notice. Consider something God created and “be glad” that he spoke it into being.

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As the biblical writers show, we do not lack wonders to choose from. The sun gives one reason for gladness (Psalm 19:1–6); insects give another (Proverbs 30:28). Gentle rains show one kind of beauty (Psalm 104:13); stormy winds show another (Psalm 148:8). We find unspeakable variety in God’s world—from sheep to sharks, earlobes to earthworms, tree rings to the rings around Jupiter — but they all share the glory of God’s original “good” (Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31).

And if the objects of our wonder are many, so too are the means for observing them. The creativity of God invites creative exploration. Maybe journal daily just a line or two about something you observe. Or try your hand at some modest poetry. Or reclaim lull moments (like waiting or walking) for noticing. Or build a five-minute sanctuary in your afternoon where you simply sit, pray, and *see*.

Throughout Genesis 1, our God took daily pleasure in the world his words had made. So, why not adorn your own days with an answering “good”?

WEEKLY REFRESHMENT *Habit 2:*

Weekly, set apart extended time to get lost in the wonders of God’s world.

Daily attentiveness has a way of delighting us in the midst of our labors, sending us back to our screens and our tasks a little more free. But our souls cry out for something more than snatches of wonder. We want to hear more than a passing melody, want to see more than a corner of the canvas. We want to give our attention to the wonders of God’s world long enough to get lost in them.

Scripture’s celebrations of creation bear the marks not simply of attention but of *extended* attention. In Proverbs 30:24–28, the wise man’s appreciation of small creatures is exceedingly big. Our Lord Jesus showed a similarly patient pleasure in creation. He knew the ways of the wind and the signs of the skies (John 3:8; Matthew 16:2–3); he sat before wildflowers with enough awareness to see splendor greater than Solomon’s (Matthew 6:28–29). The wise care about wonder; they also know that wonder can take time.

Some of us feel wonder so rarely because we rarely (or never) walk through a whole day or even afternoon with the phone silent, calendar clear, and to-do list empty. We rarely let creation or those around us set the day’s agenda. And so the trails near home go unwalked, the best of books lie unread, quiet birdsong goes unheard, deliciously complex meals go unmade, and the images of God within our own home go unobserved, unmarveled.

Both in creation and among his old-covenant people, God set apart one day in seven for the rest that leaves room for wonder. Though Christians are not bound to keep the old-covenant Sabbath, God's original six-and-one pattern still holds wisdom. But even if we choose a different interval, we need some kind of rhythm that refreshes the deepest parts of us.

Wonderers and Worshipers

Creation holds “untold resources for mental health and spiritual joy,” writes John Piper (*When I Don't Desire God*, 197). But as he emphasizes, these “untold resources” do not belong to creation itself. They belong to the Creator. And so, we look to creation to see the Artist, not simply the art; we listen for the Author in every line we read.

In Psalm 148, the psalmist's reflections follow a wonderful pattern: in meditating on sky, earth, sea, and man, he follows God's creative work from day 4 to day 6 (Genesis 1:14–31). He puts his finger to paper and traces his Father's lines, seeking to add his creaturely “good” and “very good” to God's primal pleasure.

He is, in other words, not first a wonderer but a worshiper. Breathless, he beholds trees, clouds, cows, grass, storms, ships, laughs, stars, streams, and comes away saying, “His name alone is exalted” (Psalm 148:13). The countless wonders of the world bear one signature. God has written his name in everything good.

Maybe, then, the solution to your spiritual struggle is less spiritual than you thought. And maybe the God of Genesis 1 calls you to seek him not just through his word but through his *world*, daily and weekly rejoicing in him. ♦

Scott Hubbard is a teacher and the managing editor for *Desiring God*, a pastor at All Peoples Church, and a graduate of Bethlehem College and Seminary. He and his wife, Bethany, live with their three sons in Minneapolis.



Spring Masculine Mandate Sessions

April 12 | May 17 | June 14

SPC Gymnasium @ 8:00 A.M.

