



Faculty Work Comprehensive List

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**Pay Attention!**

Luke Hawley

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## Pay Attention!

### Abstract

"Take a look around. There is much to be delighted by, a world that will surprise and astound you."

Posting about noticing the every day moments from *In All Things*, an online hub that offers insight into maintaining a faithful and orthodox Reformed Christian worldview while fearlessly engaging in every aspect of contemporary life—until all is made new.

<https://www.dordt.edu/news/in-all-things-pay-attention>

### Keywords

attention, awareness, Flannery O'Connor, hope

### Disciplines

Christianity

### Comments

*In All Things* is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt University](#).

## Pay Attention!

by Luke Hawley

Last week as I was wandering the halls, I walked past my colleague Lisa Mouw's office and was surprised—and flattered!—to find a paraphrase on her door that was attributed to both me and Flannery O'Connor: "Take long looks ... with hope."

It's been [a refrain of mine](#) since I read it in O'Connor's book of essays, *Of Mystery and Manners*. The actual quote reads, "People without hope not only don't write novels, but what is more to the point they don't read them. They don't take long looks at anything, because they lack the courage." When I read it, I was in the middle of writing an as-yet unpublished novel and wondering why on earth I was doing it, so I took O'Connor's words to heart and trudged on through the umpteenth revision.

Later, I took it to class. I like to use a phrase from Sheridan Blau when I'm teaching Core Literature. He asks students to "notice what they notice," which is the kind of tautology I can get behind. It goes hand in hand with the definition of critical thinking I often give to students: think a little bit harder than usual. It's the kind of obvious advice that I'm sure I would roll my eyes at if I weren't the one saying it.

**Take a look around. There is much to be delighted by, a world that will surprise and astound you.**

But I am trying to impress on them the importance of paying attention, which you have to do to notice what you notice. And I think it really is harder than ever. But as Ezra Klein said in [my favorite interview of the year](#), "[Attention] is the fundamental texture of your life." That is, you are what you pay attention to. It's a spiritual discipline, one worth cultivating. And it's an act of love—maybe the best way there is to love your neighbor.

And the truth is that I talk about attention all the time because I'm terrible at it and am in constant need of the reminder. This has been true my whole life, I think. I imagine most of my teachers over the course of my education wanted to grab me by the lapels and shout, "Pay Attention!" I certainly want to do that to my own students on occasion. But I hope I'd manage to do it with less urgency in my voice, less as admonition and more as an invitation. Take a look around. There is much to be delighted by, a world that will surprise and astound you. So take long looks at the things you love. Pay attention.