Anna and Simeon had waited their whole lives for Jesus. They were always watchful.

Simeon had spent so much of his life in fellowship with God that the Spirit rested on him. The Spirit led him into the temple on the day in which he would see what he had waited for all these years. His watchfulness or what we would today call mindfulness opened his heart to the Spirit’s leadership and allowed him to know who this child was. It allowed him to be so present in the moment with God that he recognized this child, Jesus. It allowed him to speak His names – salvation and light – and to talk about His destiny.

Likewise, Anna, also has been waiting. In fact, she hadn’t left the temple for 84 years, living there in a manner like the anchorites of later years. She also was fully mindful – present in the moment with God – when Jesus was presented in the Temple that day. She told others about who Jesus was.

These two elderly people are examples for us in how we are to be continually watchful for God. Instead of letting our minds be scattered and focused on so many things, we are to be mindful to everything in our surroundings so that we see God when God is present. God is present in nature – in the squirrels who scamper around to grab food, in the snow that covers the ground, in the green grass and luscious flowers that come out in the spring, in the sunrise and sunset. God also is present in people.

God is present in our families, friends, coworkers. God is present in those we like and those we don’t like. We are called to watch for God in all these people. Because if we are mindful we will see God in them.

God is present in all situations. Sometimes God isn’t present in the obvious ways; for example, we expect that God might intervene to prevent some bad thing from happening. Yet, the bad thing happens anyway. But God is present to comfort us. God is present to give victory to us. If we are mindful we will see God.

God is present in Callie, who is being baptized, and in her parents, godparents and grandparents. When we baptize, we offer an outward and visible sign of what God has already done in that child, which is to make her His child. When we as participants in this sacrament are mindful, we are able to see how God will do great things in her life. As we stay mindful, we are able to help guide her in that life in Christ.

How do we cultivate mindfulness in today’s world? Most of us won’t go to live at church for 84 years. We do it by focusing on what we see while we are seeing it, not on thinking about what we should have done differently yesterday or worrying about what we will do tomorrow. We keep our minds focused on God by realizing that God is speaking to us right now, in this moment and by being present to God in that moment. As we go through the day, we are alert to what is happening right at each moment and focused on where God is in that moment.

One challenge to this moment-by-moment focus on God for many of us may be our technology, especially our cell phones. Ninety percent of Americans have their phones within reach 24 hours a day/ 7 days a week.[[1]](#endnote-1) Our whole lives are on those phones. And, for many of us, we genuinely can’t do our jobs or our vocations without a cell phone.

Cell phones, however, aren’t really the challenge. They are neutral. It’s how we use them. An entrepreneur named Liza Kindred hosted a retreat for executives who constantly use their phones. In that retreat, she has them put their phones in a box for a short time, while they do mindfulness exercises (meditation while being spritzed with lavender spray) and connection exercises, such as talking about their feelings with others. Then the phones come back, and participants reflect upon how to use the phones more mindfully.[[2]](#endnote-2)

God, of course, is in our use of cell phones, too. We can see God through many of the things we do with our cell phones if we focus on God that way. For example, God is in our texting if we are mindful of God’s presence. God is in our Facebook checking and posting. God is in our phone calls. God is in our online identities. The challenge for us is to approach each of these activities mindfully, looking and waiting for God in each one. The challenge also is to be mindful of when we use our phones, avoiding using them when we have an opportunity to connect with loved ones in real life (such as at the dinner table.)

Other challenges to our mindfulness might be television or too many activities or too much worrying. Yet all of these challenges can become opportunities to watch for God if we just change our approach. God is in the programs we watch (or don’t watch). God is present in all our activities. God has told us not to worry too much about tomorrow.

We are invited to take some time in silence each day – apart from these things – then return to them, staying attuned to where God is present in them.

God is everywhere. We are called to be watchful. We are called to wait for God. We are called to take the time to pause, then look and listen for God in everything we do. Then we, like Simeon and Anna, can speak the name of Jesus and of all that He has done to others.

1. Wired Magazine: Tech Addiction and the Business of Mindfulness, <https://www.wired.com/story/tech-addiction-and-the-business-of-mindfulness/>, found on Paintbox, a blog by Ruth Woodliff-Stanley, <https://www.ruthws.com/paintbox> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Tech Addiction article [↑](#endnote-ref-2)