

FAITH *Matters*

Written by **Matt Dodrill**,
Senior Pastor, Pulaski
Heights Baptist Church



“I believe in the church of baseball.”

If you love baseball, you know exactly where these words come from: Annie Savoy of *Bull Durham*.

While I don't technically ascribe to her official religion, her words have always resonated with me because the rhythms of baseball closely resemble the rhythms of the church. There are usually a few explosive moments – a home run, a double play, an outfield assist – that make fans rise to their feet as though to sing Easter hallelujahs. But then there are long, drawn-out lulls that provoke complaints about the slow pace. You might say it's a lot like Ordinary Time.

Starting with the Day of Pentecost and running up to Advent, Ordinary Time is the longest season of the church year. The word “ordinary” doesn't carry a pejorative meaning here. It simply reflects the fact that most of our days aren't filled with home runs or messianic births. Rather, they're filled with porch sitting, dog petting, daydreaming and deep sleeping.

And here's the thing: God meets us on those plain planes of life just as God meets us in the valleys and on the mountaintops. But in order to see it, you must pay attention. The adrenaline junkie who looks for the baseball gods exclusively in the grand slams and no-hitters will fail to notice the smaller details: the decoy signs coming from the dugouts, the cat-and-mouse game between the pitcher and batter, the non-verbal communication between the middle infielders. Like Elijah on Mount Horeb, the attentive fan hears the “still small voice” in these ordinary moments rather than finding the game's sublimity solely in baseball's “fire and earthquakes.”

Likewise, if we pay attention during ordinary time, we'll discover that what *seems* ordinary is actually shot through with God's glory.

In these dog days of summer, I hope you'll take a few moments to reflect on the beauty of the ordinary. Do you hear the rain falling and the leaves rustling? What do you smell? Have you allowed your bare feet touch the grass? Have you seen – really *seen* – the perennials this time of year?

Ordinary stuff, right? But ordinary stuff requires our closest attention. And as Simone Weil once said: “Attention, taken to its highest degree, is the same thing as prayer. It presupposes faith and love. Absolutely unmixed attention is prayer.”

Through prayerful attention to the ordinary, you might just discover that you're standing on holy ground.



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