

Showing Up

Noticing what we bring with us, into our relationships
and into prayer

ANCHORED VERSE

“Therefore let us [with privilege] approach the throne of grace [that is, the throne of God’s gracious favor] with confidence and without fear, so that we may receive mercy [for our failures] and find [His amazing] grace to help in time of need [an appropriate blessing, coming just at the right moment].”

— Hebrews 4:16 (AMP) —

After a week on the road and a house to prepare, I’m reflecting on a question that kept following me: *how am I showing up?* Drawing on Hebrews 4:16 and the psychology of internal working models, this issue looks at the expectations, wounds, and old stories we carry into our relationships, including our relationship with God, and why noticing them is where growth begins.

by Sean Brannan

Friday, 2 October, 2026

Hey friend,

Thank you for opening this week's Anchored Newsletter. I know your inbox is full and your week probably is too, so I don't take it lightly that you took a few minutes to read this.

A Quick Update: This week has had a lot of moving parts. I spent most of it on the road heading back to Arizona, and since getting home, the days have filled up fast: time with my son, getting the house ready for winter, and making room for family who are coming to visit. There have been schedules, projects, conversations, and a long list of things that needed my attention, along with plenty that didn't go according to plan.

Showing Up

Somewhere in the middle of all of that, one question kept following me down the highway and into every room I walked into: How am I showing up? I'm asking about more than whether I'm physically there. I can be in the room, answer the phone, finish the project, sit at the dinner table, or carve out time for someone and still not really be present with them. Presence has less to do with location than with what I'm carrying when I arrive, and that's where my attention has been this week.

I never show up empty-handed. I bring expectations. I bring past experiences, wounds, fears, assumptions, and a whole set of lessons I've learned about what relationships are supposed to feel like. Some days I bring confidence and openness. Other days I bring caution, defensiveness, a need for control, or the instinct to protect myself before anything has even happened. Most of the time none of that gets announced. It doesn't walk in ahead of me and introduce itself; it quietly becomes the lens I use to interpret everything that happens next.

Here's what that looks like in real life, and you may recognize a few of these in your own week:

- » **Someone gets quiet**, and I decide what their silence means before I ever ask, usually assuming it has something to do with me.
- » **A conversation feels a little different than usual**, and I start filling in the blanks with a story about distance, frustration, or rejection.
- » **God doesn't answer a prayer the way I expected**, and I begin drawing conclusions about what He's doing, how He sees me, or whether He's near at all.

In each of those moments, I respond, and by that point my response is aimed as much at what I've already decided it meant as at what actually happened. The facts are usually small. The meaning I attach to them is what drives the reaction.

Psychology has a helpful name for this. Attachment researchers talk about “*internal working models*,” which are the mental templates we build, mostly early in life, about how relationships work: whether people stay, whether needs get met, whether it’s safe to be fully seen. Those templates formed to help us predict and survive the environment we grew up in, and in that original setting they often did their job. The trouble is that they keep running long after the setting changes. When an old template meets a new situation, the mind fills the gaps with what it already expects, usually faster than we can consciously think it through. That’s why the question I’ve been carrying is so uncomfortable: *how much of the way I show up today is shaped by what’s actually in front of me, and how much is shaped by what I’ve learned to expect?*

That question doesn’t stop at my human relationships. It follows me into prayer. When I come before God, am I responding to who He has revealed Himself to be, or am I sometimes relating to Him through lenses formed somewhere else, by people who were inconsistent, conditional, or distant? This is where Hebrews 4:16 has been working on me. The writer invites us to approach the throne of grace with confidence, and the Greek word there, **parrēsia**, carries the sense of boldness and freedom of speech: the openness of someone who isn’t bracing for rejection. That kind of confidence isn’t something we can manufacture by trying harder to feel secure, and the writer never asks us to. He roots it in something outside of us. The verse just before it tells us we have a High Priest who understands our weaknesses because He has faced every kind of testing we face, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). **Our confidence rests on His character**, which He has already demonstrated, and it doesn’t depend on whatever our past relationships trained us to expect, whether that was rejection, love with conditions attached, distance, or silence. *The invitation is to let who He actually is correct the template, instead of letting the template define Him.*

I don’t think the goal is to become perfectly healed, perfectly secure, or completely free from every old pattern before we’re allowed to enter meaningful relationships, with people or with God. Part of growth is simply becoming aware of what we’re bringing into them, because you can’t surrender a lens you don’t know you’re wearing. That awareness is usually where formation starts: *noticing the story I told about someone’s silence, catching the conclusion I drew about God’s timing, and asking honestly whether it came from what’s true or from what’s familiar.*

That’s a question I’m still sitting with, and I’m not going to pretend I’ve resolved it in a week. For now, I think it’s enough to notice how I’m showing up, and to bring what I notice honestly to the One who already understands it. Hebrews 4:16 promises grace to help in time of need, and the moment we catch ourselves reacting to an old story is often exactly that time.

Anchored Prayer

Abba,

Thank You that I don't have to approach You bracing for rejection. Thank You for a High Priest who understands my weakness and still invites me to come close. Show me what I've been carrying into my relationships, with the people I love and with You. Where I've been reading old stories into new moments, open my eyes and gently correct the lens. Teach me to respond to who You really are, and help me show up for my family and the people around me with honesty, patience, and presence. I bring You what I notice, and I trust You with what I can't fix yet.

Hallelujah. Amen.

My Prayer

“The invitation is to let who He actually is correct the template, instead of letting the template define Him.”

Anchored Breathwork

Grounding Breath (4–2–6) for Showing Up Present

Purpose: To help your body arrive in the moment you're actually in, so you can respond to what's in front of you instead of what you're bracing for.

Posture: Sit comfortably with both feet flat on the floor. Let your shoulders drop. Rest one hand on your chest and notice the chair holding your weight, a simple reminder that you are here, now, and not back in an older moment.

1. **Inhale** through your nose for **4 seconds**.

Quiet cue: *"Abba, I'm here..."*

2. **Hold** gently for **2 seconds**.

Quiet cue: *"You're here with me..."*

3. **Exhale** slowly for **6 seconds**.

Quiet cue: *"I release what I expected."*

Repeat for 5–7 cycles.

Pro Tip: If the hold feels uncomfortable, skip it and simply breathe 4 in, 6 out. The longer exhale is what tells your nervous system it's safe to settle, and a settled body makes it much easier to notice what you're actually bringing into the room.

“Our confidence rests on His character, which He has already demonstrated, and it doesn't depend on whatever our past relationships trained us to expect.”

Anchored Reflection

This week, try paying attention to the lens before you pay attention to the moment. These questions aren't meant to be answered perfectly, only honestly.

Think of a recent moment where someone's silence, tone, or distance bothered you. What story did you tell yourself about what it meant, and where might you have learned that story?

When you pray, what do you tend to expect from God: closeness, disappointment, correction, silence? Does that expectation match what Scripture shows you about His character, or does it sound more like someone from your past?

Who in your life will you be showing up for this week, and what would it look like to arrive with fewer assumptions?

Your Ideas are Important

Every newsletter, article, and Anchored Reflection begins with a real question or burden.

If something is pressing on your heart, send it my way. Each week I choose a focus for the newsletter, an article, or a reflection. What you share could be the catalyst for someone else's breakthrough. I would also love your feedback on recent articles.

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