

Caught Paying the Bill

A note from the person who gave you this:

Hello.

Thanks for spending a little time with these workbooks.

They aren't races.

They're walks.

Some people move through one in an afternoon.

Others take their time over days or weeks.

Either is just fine.

I won't ask you to agree with everything here.

I won't ask you to finish every page.

I won't ask you to do every exercise.

I'll simply invite you to notice a few ordinary moments as you go.

If something stays with you, wonderful.

If nothing does, that's okay too.

Thank you for taking the walk anyway.

I'm glad you're here.

— *Frank*

Caught

Paying the Bill

A Workbook

By

Frank Wood



A CAUGHT SOONER BOOK

Copyright © 2026 Frank Wood
All rights reserved.

This book was written to be shared in spirit. Please feel free to recommend it, lend it, or give it to someone who may find it useful.

Published by
Caught Sooner Books

First edition, 2026

For more information, visit
caughtsooner.com

CONTENTS

	Welcome	9
	A Note from David	12
LESSON 1	Paying the Bill	15
LESSON 2	The Garage	25
LESSON 3	Paying Bills	39
LESSON 4	Between	53
LESSON 5	The Table	67
LESSON 6	Walking the Rows	79
LESSON 7	The Harvest	91
LESSON 8	The Pen	103
	A comment from the author.	115
	Caught Book Club Opportunity	117

Welcome

Yes, this is a workbook.

Eight lessons.

Some short stories. A few small questions along the way.

Nothing here is going to transform you.

Not the goal.

The goal is smaller.

To notice the thing a little sooner than you might have.

That's it.

And — worth saying.

This workbook works with you. Not on you.

Some part of you brings the willingness to look.

The lessons meet that part.

Where the willingness goes, the work goes.

That part is yours.

It does ask something of you.

A little focus. Not a lot.

Enough to be in the room while you're reading.

If this is your first Caught book — welcome.

Different door. Same you.

If you've been to another one of these — welcome back.

Different room. Same porch.

You'll see a similar structure.

Eight lessons. Stories. Small questions. Two letters at the close.

That's intentional. And it's not complicated. It's structure.

Similar to:

— *houses. Studs. Joists. Headers. The framing the walls hang on.*

— *roads. Shoulders. Lane markings. The grade of the curve. The drainage you don't see.*

What changes is what each book is about. The structure stays.

Live in the house. Drive on the road. Carry the lesson.

Once you see the structure, you can stop noticing it. The lessons do the rest.

This workbook will explore something that may already be operating in you.

Paying the bill is something we do.

But this workbook is less about the paying and more about what travels with the bill — and what we end up carrying long after the check has gone out.

Lesson 1 will name the workbook's focus and offer you an anchor — a way of helping you see the relationship between paying the bill and paying *for* the bill.

The pace is yours.

Take what you take.

Come in.

A Note from David

Hello.

I'm glad you're here.

You can call me David.

You'll find me throughout the Caught workbooks, audio lessons, and other conversations that live around this work.

Over the next few lessons, I'll be walking alongside you through this workbook.

Whether you're sitting with a coffee, taking a walk, riding a train, or spending a few quiet minutes in your favorite chair, think of these pages less as a class and more as a conversation.

As you read, you may notice stories, questions, and small moments to reflect on. There are no grades here. No right pace. No finish line.

Just ideas to sit with.

If it helps, imagine me as a workbook companion. A friendly voice beside you on a porch, a park bench, or a walk around the neighborhood.

Take what helps.

Leave what doesn't.

And take your time.

I'm glad you're here.

— *David*



LESSON 1

Paying the Bill

Hello. I'm glad you're here.

Paying the bill is something we do.

Yes bill is a word. And shocker, invoice is also a word.

And yet this workbook has a focus — it is paying the bill.

We will spend some time looking at bills, invoices and more importantly paying the bill.

STORIES

Two small stories to start.

The first one is about a vacation.

A couple decided to take a trip.

To a beach.

All inclusive.

And they decided to pay for the trip on their credit card.

Comfortable seats on the plane flight. Yes.

An all inclusive hotel and spa.

Three pools. Three.

A water view room. Spa treatment included, that happened on day two.

Four on site restaurants and 2 poolside bars.

It was grand.

Sunburn on day four. Laughter between meals.

A gift for a neighbor watching our pet Labrador.

It was a good trip.

Oh and photos, the kind that are shared.

When we got home, the bill was waiting.

And the bill was paid. And it was a vacation that we still remember.

The bill, that is not a part of the vacation's memory.

— *I've taken a trip like that.*

— *I've paid a bill like that.*

The second story is about a bike.

The bike was for their son's seventh birthday.

The asking for the new bike had been for more than a few years.

The parents knew the kind of bike he wanted.

The son had shown them pictures.

The bike needed to be red.

Handlebars.

But the bike the son wanted was not cheap.

So the parents paid for the bike on layaway.

Every month, sent a payment.

Began paying the month after their son's sixth birthday.

And then the birthday came, and the bike was his.

Paid for.

Rolling down the driveway.

Ridden with his neighborhood friends.

We smiled.

The parents paid on this bill, a bit at a time, for months.

The parents carried the bill, gladly. In quiet too.

— *I've saved for someone like that.*

— *I've paid a bill like that.*

Look at those two a second.

Neither bill was really just a bill.

One was tied to a trip. To memories. To a week you'd take again.

One was tied to a boy. To a birthday. To a bike in the driveway.

Bills are like that. Tied to this and that.

Tied to the thing we bought. Tied to the people we bought it for.

And tied, one way or another, to us.

When a thing is tied to you, you're carrying it.

Even when you're not thinking about it. Even when your hands look empty.

Every bill we've paid, or are paying on, or haven't gotten to yet

there's a little weight to it.

Some of it you carry gladly, like the folks with the bike.

Some of it you've been carrying so long you've stopped feeling it at all.

We won't sort that out today. It's the first walk.

I just want you to notice it's there.

A bill arrives.

Something arrives with it.

Different bill.

And yet sometimes the bill is more than the bill.

The check goes out.

Sometimes the cost stays long after.

We learn to pay for things we buy.

We also realize we keep paying for the things we buy.

Don't worry if that doesn't fully land yet.

It will. We've got eight walks to take.

Before we go — one thing.

Not a quiz. Just bring one thing to mind and sit with it a second.

Think of one bill, or one invoice, that's arrived in your life.

It may have come in an envelope. It may not have.

It doesn't have to be big. It doesn't have to be paid yet.

Just the first one that comes to mind. Don't reach for it. Let it come.

Now — imagine you're holding it.

Not the paper. Not the number on the screen.

Just the feel of it. In your hand.

How heavy is it, right now?

That's enough for today.

CARRY THIS.

This week — once — when a bill arrives, or when one you're already carrying comes to mind,

just notice the weight of it. In your hand.

You don't have to do anything with it.

Just notice it a little sooner than you might have.

That's plenty.

Next time.

I want to show you a garage.

Yours, probably. And a couple of trees out front.

Come find me. See you in Lesson 2.



LESSON 2



The Garage

Thanks for coming back. With workbooks, there's a tendency to stop and so far you haven't. That's a good sign.

In the first lesson, we sat with a bill.

In this lesson, we will take a short walk and explore this thing called paying the bill a little.

We will take things slowly, and understand there is no hurry. Right now, we are just looking at a second lesson.

Ready?

Here we go.

Let's walk outside and visit a garage.

For some readers it is a closet. For others it might be a junk drawer.

Or that one spare room with the door that mostly stays shut.

We all, well, most of us have one. I know a couple of people with two.

But I realize nearly everyone has one.

You went out there looking for something you need.

For instance maybe a flat head screwdriver.

And you opened the door, and then you just... stood there.

How did this happen.

Not really a question. More the thing you say out loud to a roomful of stuff.

Because you don't remember the one box in the corner that has been taped shut.

Or the paint can with the lid not quite on. Was it for the kitchen or the front door. You don't even look at the color, just the lid.

And then you see the Christmas lights — and remember the strand that half works, that you keep, every year, for reasons nobody can name.

Or the ladder in the corner you've been meaning to return to your cousin that you're slowly forgetting was even in your garage.

There was never a Saturday you woke up and said, today's the day, today I fill the garage.

It just filled. The way a garage fills.

One ordinary Saturday at a time.

No one, especially you, set out to fill it.

It filled anyway.

Just outside the garage, the light's better.

And near the garage, you can see two trees.

Sally planted one. Johnny planted the other.

They were given the trees at school, years ago — came home with little saplings in plastic bags, the way kids do.

Sally, not only excited, took her tree seriously. Well, she did for at least the first four months.

She carried her, new, gallon jug back and forth for weeks. Watering. Checking. Watering again. Asking about trees and wondering what else she could do to care for her tree. Over time, though, the watering jug, well it found its way into the garage.

Johnny and his tree were out there too, in the yard.

Johnny would run past his tree and say something and yet he was mostly playing. Kickball, skipping rope, doing what little boys do outside in a yard.

And then — you know how it goes — twenty years.

They're both just trees now.

Standing there. Same yard.

And here's the part I love.

Nobody lost.

Sally was busy loving that tree, at least for four months, maybe five.

Johnny was busy being a kid in a yard with a tree in it.

Two whole childhoods. Same trees. Each growing together.

And neither one of them was standing back watching the trees grow.

They were just — being children and living with trees.

Both of those were bills, you know.

The garage full of them. Each thing in there arrived once, got paid for once, and then just — stayed. Carried. A little memory, a little weight, and you can't always tell which is which anymore.

And the trees. Different bill, the both of them. Same little bag from school.

Sally paid hers with a watering jug and trips to the spigot.

Johnny paid for his with periodic comments “hey there Mr. tree”.

And yet.

Both grew — the garage and its contents, and the trees with their leaves.

Funny. The growing didn't wait around to find out how anybody felt about it.

Look at those two for a second.

In both, something was paid for.

In the garage, things were bought. Some once, some years ago. The lights, the box, the paint. The money changed hands. But they're still here. Taking up space. Some of them don't even work anymore.

With the trees, the kids paid too — Sally with water and attention, Johnny mostly by just being a kid in the yard. They didn't pay for long. But both trees kept growing anyway.

One payment left things behind that still need carrying.

The other payment was small and brief, and something kept growing long after.

And yet

There was a different kind of carrying.

A bill arrives.

Something arrives with it.

We pay the bill.

We pay for the bill.

I'm beginning to wonder if some of the biggest bills I've ever paid...

...never came in an envelope.

That's your field. All of it. The good rows and the ones you'd rather not walk.

You've been tending the whole thing for years — no jug, no plan, half the time not even looking.

And yeah — some of it, you'll look up one day and realize you were watering the wrong corner for a while.

That part's honest. It stings. I'm not going to talk you out of it.

They say the best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago.

Sure.

But you know the rest of that one as well as I do.

The next best time is this afternoon.

And look — there's still ground here. I'll grab a shovel.

Let's look at one real thing.

Not to fix it. Nothing to fix today.

Just to look. I'm right here with you.

1.

Picture your one real place. The garage, the drawer, the corner.

Go stand in front of it in your head. What's in there?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

2.

Pick one thing in it you never decided to keep. It just... stayed.

When did it go in there? You can't say, can you. Funny how that works.

3.

Now step back outside with me.

Think of something with no door — a friendship, a habit, the quiet between you and somebody.

Look at it the way you just looked in the garage. What's been filling in there?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins or other markings on the paper.

4.

Anything catch you off guard? Anything you hadn't been looking at?

You opened a door. You found a thing that just stayed.

You stepped outside and looked at something with no door.

By more than you knew. It's always more than we knew.

CARRY THIS.

Sometime this week, open a real door. Garage, closet, drawer.

Stand there the extra second. Let yourself say it — how did this happen.

Then let the question wander off to a place that doesn't have a door.

That's the whole assignment. I told you it was a light one.

Next time.

Two people. The very same thing.

And somehow not the same thing at all.

Come find me. See you in Lesson 3.



LESSON 3

Paying Bills

Some bills are for this and some are for that.

Last time we looked in a garage, for you it might be a drawer, a computer file or a closet and considered a couple of trees.

Both told us something about the paying of bills.

In this lesson, we will look at paying bills from another perspective.

It is funny how more than one person can be engaged in what looks like a similar thing, like paying bills.

And yet, they are not quite doing or experiencing the same thing at all.

STORIES.

Two short moments before we go further. No hurry.

There's a boy who notices something about his dad.

Nothing dramatic. Just a pattern.

Dad's always driving Mr. Jones.

Like he's a taxi.

Driving him here, driving him there, always, it seems, driving him somewhere.

The hardware store. An appointment. To pick up a part.

Always in the truck. Always going.

So he says it to his older sister.

Not complaining. Just saying what he sees.

"Dad's always driving Mr. Jones. Like always driving him."

And she nods to her brother, a nod that says yes he is driving Mr. Jones. She, though, doesn't say much.

Yes, she is the older sister. And, yes, she knows part of the story about Mr. Jones her brother doesn't.

Dad and Mr. Jones have been friends for a long time, longer than like long.

Since before either of them was even born.

The hardware store was never the destination.

The driving was not even the point.

The younger brother was looking at the hardware store.

He was thinking about the driving.

Dad and Mr. Jones, forty years of friendship, memories from many drives, drives neither child could even imagine driving.

We can look here and we can look there.

The younger brother did.

So did the older sister.

So did the Dad.

— *I've looked right at something and seen the errand.*

— *Different truck. Same hardware store.*

Another story. This one is about a gym.

Jimmy goes to the gym.

He goes to the gym every day.

He's gone to the gym for years.

When he was young, he knew exactly what the gym was for.

He had his routine.

Lower body

Upper body

Cardio

Oh and abs too

Then he would pass the mirror.

His arms, his back, his legs, his abs, how they looked.

He tracked the lifts too.

His personal bests.

His weekly total pounds lifted.

He knew or at least he thought, how he stacked up against Billy and Henry and Jill.

Same person. A lot of years later. Still going.

Same lockers. Same hum off the machines. Same sweat.

He's 57 now.

The mirror is still on the wall.

The everyday is now three times a week.

His lifts are consistent, not personal bests.

Now he smiles with Billy, Henry and Jane.

Upper body day is now can I carry my grandson to his bed.

Lower body day is now climbing the staircase with ease.

Cardio, well cardio is still cardio.

That workout was feeding this from the very first day.

The body was always becoming the one that could lift a grandchild.

That was always what the gym was for.

All those years they thought they were looking in a mirror.

They were tending something the mirror couldn't show them.

— *I've done a thing for one reason.*

— *And found out it was for another.*

The bill nobody saw.

The dad and his driving, was paying a bill of friendship.

A tank of gas. A Saturday morning. A seat held open, week after week.

The bill was not hardware stores or the 6 AM pick up.

The gym was a gym that was paying for good health.

Monday to Friday now every other day.

Once it was a reflection from a mirror.

Today it is carrying a grandson to his bed, or climbing a set of stairs.

And yet the cardio is still the cardio.

Same errands. Same sweat.

And a whole friendship, a whole grandchild, riding along inside —
being paid into, quiet, the whole time.

The shape, by now, looks like this.

Look at those two for a second.

In both, something was being paid for over time.

With the dad and his friend, the payment showed up every week —
gas, time, a seat in the truck. From the outside it looked like errands.

From inside the truck, it was forty years of friendship moving down the road.

With the person at the gym, the payment showed up for years — sweat, time, showing up. From the outside it looked like staying in shape. From inside the body, it was slowly becoming someone who could still get down on the floor with a grandchild.

Same action.

Different thing being carried.

A bill arrives.

Something arrives with it.

We pay the bill.

We pay for the bill.

You've heard it before.

You'll hear it again.

The boy will understand the truck one day.

The one at the gym already did.

THE SAME THING — A CLOSER LOOK.

Some questions. Sit with these.

A specific moment — not in general.

1.

Picture one thing you do all the time.

Something a stranger might call an errand, or a routine, or nothing much.

Go be there a second. What's it look like from the outside?

Write it in a couple of words

2.

Now look again — the way the sister looked at that truck.

What's actually growing in it that the stranger would never catch?

Name it

3.

Now flip it around.

Something you've only ever seen the surface of — the way the young one only saw the mirror.

Look one layer under. What might it really be tending?

Write what you find

4.

Look back at all three.

Not analyze. Just look.

What are you noticing now that you weren't a minute ago?

Write a word or two

Not to fix.

Not to solve.

Just to look.

Sooner than you might have.

That's your thing. Not someone else's.

Yours.

You can come back to it.

CARRY THIS.

This week — once — pick one ordinary thing you do.

A drive. A meal. A text you send the same person every morning.

Do it once the way the sister watched that truck — knowing what it might really be.

That is enough.

NEXT LESSON.

A glimpse of what's ahead. Held lightly.

What it's like to stand between two fields.

One you're still paying for. One that's still calling.

See you in Lesson 4.



LESSON 4

Between

*Still paying for one thing. Still waiting on another.
And it's there we begin this lesson.*

Come on in. Sit down a minute.

Last lesson, we looked at two different ways people approach paying the bill. We also may realize not everyone sees bill paying the same way.

This lesson we will slow things down a bit. So, you will need some patience. Please know we are moving forward, but for the moment, read with a patient mind.

We're just going to stand in one spot for a while.

It's a spot you already know.

S T O R I E S .

Two short moments before we go further. No hurry.

A couple installs a new kitchen.

Cabinets, a new sink, a faucet, a nice faucet, new floors.

And, a dishwasher. They didn't have a dishwasher until now.

Paid for, on the store credit account. Offering twelve months, same as cash.

First, they had to qualify for the credit.

Which, they did.

They paid their bills and had a history too.

Kitchen, all of it, installed.

The dishwasher was amazing.

It's actually been ten months since the installation.

The couple did make the first payment. Then, well.

The kitchen's lovely. They use it every day.

Meals, coffee, dishes, the floor, they love the floor too.

But, there are eleven more payments due.

And two months.

Until the interest begins to build.

Nothing dramatic. Just quiet.

But a lingering quiet.

— *The future already arrived.*

— *The past isn't done.*

Months later, same couple.

He's been wanting new golf clubs.

He knows the brand. He's done the research.

He's actually used a similar set, three times.

His scores with these clubs are lower, by a couple strokes.

But a couple strokes means something.

In his mind, the clubs are nothing fancy.

To help make his golf a little more fun.

He tells himself, and his wife, he'll get them once things settle down.

But things don't settle down.

The kitchen payments have begun, but aren't completed.

The car needed new tires.

Then the air conditioning in the house.

Every time a little extra is saved, he sees the golf clubs and he sees a new bill.

It's never a crisis. It's just... always something.

And one afternoon he catches himself and says to his partner.

“There is always something, isn’t there.”

And then “We can’t even buy this one little thing.”

And something shifts.

Because the couple has been saying a version of that for a while now.

And not only about clubs.

They have circled other things.

A change in jobs. Having a kid. Caring for an aging parent.

And every time they get close, the same quiet thought walks in.

“There is always something, isn’t there.”

— *The future is calling.*

— *The past still owns today.*

The bill that keeps its seat at the table.

The couple with the kitchen has a bill that shows up before they do.

They paid it once, gladly. And it kept a standing appointment.

A slice of every month, already spoken for, quietly, ahead of them.

And the fellow with the clubs has a different one.

Not a bill that comes due. A bill that takes up the room.

Every time something new calls, an old bill is already sitting in the only chair.

One bill keeps getting paid. One bill keeps deciding.

And both of them are just — sitting there. At the table. Not going anywhere.

You know this spot.

Look at those two for a second.

In one, the bill showed up after something chosen gladly. It was paid, and it kept showing up anyway — a quiet slice of every month already spoken for.

In the other, the bill wasn't even here yet. It was the thing that kept taking the only chair every time something new tried to sit down.

Same spot. Different kind of carrying.

Most of us are standing in it right now, about something or other.

The shape, by now, looks like this.

A bill arrives.

Something arrives with it.

We pay the bill.

We pay for the bill.

You've heard it before.

You'll hear it again.

The boy will understand the truck one day.

The one at the gym already did.

You've heard it before.

You'll hear it again.

Sometimes we're still paying for what we already chose.

Sometimes we're wondering if there'll ever be room for what's calling
next.

Most of us, one time or another, have stood right between those two
fields.

And here's the thing. I'm not going to get you out of it today.

I don't think that's what this spot is for.

I just didn't want you standing in it by yourself.

So I'll stand here a minute too.

Let's just look. We don't have to fix a thing.

1.

Picture something you're still paying for.

Doesn't have to be money. A choice that still takes its slice of every week.

Go stand there a second. What is it?

2.

Now picture the thing that's been calling.

The one you keep saying you'll get to once things settle down.

What is it?

3.

Now just stand between the two of them for a second.

Don't solve it. I mean it. Just notice what it's like to stand there.

4.

What are you noticing, now that you're standing still?

You named what you're still paying for.

You named what's calling.

You stood between them.

And you didn't have to pick. Nobody said you did.

CARRY THIS.

This week, when you catch yourself saying “once things settle down”

just notice you said it.

Don’t fix it. Don’t decide anything.

Just notice you’re standing between two fields, same as the rest of us.

That’s plenty.

NEXT LESSON.

A glimpse of what’s ahead. Held lightly.

A table with more on it than anyone planned.

See you in Lesson 5.



LESSON 5

The Table

One choice. Growing more than one thing at once.

None of it canceling the rest.

There you are. Sit.

Last time we stood between two fields and didn't try to fix a thing.

Today, one table. One ordinary supper.

And more growing under it than anybody at the table can see.

S T O R I E S .

One supper. No hurry.

Dinner got a little complicated at this house a while back.

Somebody in the family has allergies. The real kind. The kind you read labels for.

And over time, everybody adjusted.

Some restaurants came off the list. Favorite meals quietly disappeared.

Reading the box, asking the waiter, planning ahead — just how this family eats now.

Nothing dramatic about it. It's simply the way things are.

Now — one of the kids has gotten a little tired of it.

Doesn't say much. Just goes quiet when the dinner talk starts.

Sighs a little when another place comes off the list.

Wonders, here and there, what it'd be like if everybody could just order whatever they wanted.

And the parents see it.

They want to keep the one with allergies safe.

They also want the other one to feel light once in a while. Carefree.

Both of those are real.

Both of them matter.

Some nights they sit at that table longer than they meant to, just trying to land on where to eat.

No choice feels like the whole answer.

Every single one takes good care of something — and asks something of somebody else.

And then they pick.

The way families do.

And supper happens. The talk is good. The food gets shared. The night moves on.

— *I've sat at that table.*

— *I've made that kind of choice.*

The table was growing more than dinner.

Safety was growing.

So was belonging.

Patience, maybe.

And maybe a little quiet frustration, right alongside it.

Feeling looked after was growing.

And so was the wish to just feel normal for one night.

Here's the part I'd sit with.

None of those cancels out the others.

They all just... grow. Together. Off the same supper.

The table doesn't pick which one matters most.

It doesn't keep score.

It takes the whole choice, the whole night, and grows everything that was in it.

The bill nobody handed them.

Nobody mailed this family a bill for how they eat now.

There was no envelope. No number at the bottom.

Just a choice, made again every supper, quiet, the way families do.

And they've been paying it. You can see it if you look.

A little safety. A little frustration. A little looking-after. A little wish to feel normal.

All of it coming off the same table, at the same time.

Funny — the bills that never come in envelopes might be the ones we pay the longest.

A bill arrives.

Something arrives with it.

Different bill.

And yet sometimes the bill is more than the bill.

The check goes out.

Sometimes the cost stays long after.

We learn to pay for things we buy.

We also realize we keep paying for the things we buy.

The shape, by now, looks like this.

You've heard it before.

You'll hear it again.

Nobody at that table was wrong.

Not the parents. Not the kid who went quiet.

They were all just... at the table. Loving each other the only way the night allowed.

That's most of our choices, if we're honest.

They feed two things at once. Sometimes three.

And the field takes all of it and grows what it grows.

I stopped trying to sort mine into good and bad a long time ago.

They were never going to hold still for it.

Let's look at one of yours. Gently.

1.

Picture one choice you make over and over for the people you love.

A small one. Where to eat. How to spend a Saturday. What you say yes to.

Go be at that table. What's the choice?

[illegible]

2.

Now look at what it takes good care of.

Don't judge it. Just notice. What does this choice protect?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

3.

Now look again — at what the very same choice asks of somebody.

Maybe of you. Both are growing. What's the other harvest?

4.

Sitting with both of those at once — what are you noticing?

You pictured a real table.

You saw what the choice protects.

You saw what it costs.

And you let both be true. That's the whole thing.

CARRY THIS.

This week, when you make one of those everyday choices for someone

just notice it's growing more than one thing.

Don't fix the other one. Don't feel bad about it.

Just let yourself see that it's there, growing right alongside.

That's enough.

NEXT LESSON.

Someone who tended a field for years.

And only later saw what else had been growing in it.

See you in Lesson 6.



LESSON 6

Walking the Rows

*One person. A whole life of good work. And a field
bigger than she can see.*

Come sit. This one I want to take slow.

Last time, one table growing more than supper.

This time, one person. A whole life of good work.

We're going to walk her rows with her.

Not to grade them. Just to walk.

S T O R I E S .

One life of good work. No hurry.

She's a math teacher. And she's good. Really good.

The kind whose students do well, year after year, and everyone knows why.

She knows her subject cold.

She stays late. She reworks a lesson that didn't land. She tracks every kid's progress like a gardener watching a row come up.

And she cares. Don't mistake the rigor for cold — she loves these kids.

She just loves them the way she knows how. Through the math. Get them to understand it. Get them to where it clicks. That's the love.

So she measures what she was taught to measure.

She tends what she knows how to tend.

She watches for what she was trained to watch for.

And she does all of it well.

Now and then something drifts in from off to the side.

A note from a kid who graduated years ago.

A parent who stops her in the grocery store to say something she doesn't quite know what to do with.

A thing a student says, long after, that doesn't match any number she ever wrote down.

She notices those. She's not made of stone.

But she sets them aside. They feel like the exceptions.

The real harvest, she's sure, is the part you can see and count.

And so she keeps on.

Tending the field she knows how to tend.

— I tend a field like that.

— I measure what I was taught to measure.

Walk her rows a minute.

Not to judge them. Just to notice.

Some things grew because of her.

Some grew despite her.

Some never came up at all.

And some — she has no idea are even out there.

The field is always bigger than the one tending it.

The bills that never came in envelopes.

Look at what we've walked through so far.

Some bills arrived in envelopes.

The kitchen. The bike. The vacation.

Others never did.

No one ever mailed the dad a bill for driving his old friend around all those years.

No one sent an invoice for the years spent poking at the reflection in the gym mirror.

Hmm.

And yet both were being paid for. Quietly. Over time.

And here she is. Same thing, in a way.

No one ever handed her a bill for what she was really growing in those kids.

There's no envelope for that. No number at the bottom.

She's been paying it for a whole career, and she can't quite see it yet.

Funny how that works.

A bill arrives.

Something arrives with it.

We pay the bill.

We pay for the bill.

The shape, by now, looks like this.

You've heard it before.

You'll hear it again.

I want to be careful here.

She's not the cautionary tale. She's the good one. I mean that.

Most of us would be lucky to tend a field that well.

She's done nothing wrong.

She's just looking where she was taught to look.

Aren't we all.

We'll leave her here for now. Still at it. Still tending.

There's a thing she hasn't seen yet.

But it isn't time. Not in this lesson.

Walk a few of your own rows.

Not to grade them. Just to see what's there.

1.

Picture something you tend well. Work, a home, a craft, a person.

The thing you're good at and known for. Go stand in it. What is it?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

2.

What do you measure in it? What tells you it's going well?

Don't judge the answer. Just notice what you watch for.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

3.

Now — has anything ever drifted in from off to the side?

A thank-you that surprised you. A thing someone said that didn't match your numbers.

Did you set it aside? Just notice that you did.

[illegible]

4.

What are you noticing now?

You walked a row you tend well.

You saw what you measure.

You found something you'd set aside.

We'll come back to it. Leave it standing for now.

CARRY THIS.

This week, just once, notice something that drifts in from the side.
A small thank-you. A thing a person says that you'd normally let pass.
Don't do anything with it. Don't even decide what it means.
Just don't set it aside quite so fast.

NEXT LESSON.

The thing she hasn't seen yet.
And what happens when she finally does.
See you in Lesson 7.



LESSON 7

The Harvest

*She tended one field for years. And only later saw
what else had been growing in it.*

You came back for the rest of it. I'm glad.

We left her tending. Still good at it. Still sure the harvest was the part you could count.

Some years go by now.

Nothing dramatic. No crisis. Just time.

S T O R I E S .

One more moment with her. No hurry.

It's the start of a new year.

New-student orientation. The usual shuffle — folders, schedules, nervous kids, nervous parents.

A boy comes through her line.

She doesn't know him. But he knows her name.

"You had my sister. For math."

She smiles, asks the sister's name, places her. A few years back. Good kid.

And then the boy says the thing.

Not like it's a big thing. Just passing it along, the way a kid relays a message from home.

“She always told me you had eyes that saw people.”

“That you'd look at somebody and kind of... see what they could be. And like it.”

Then he takes his folder and moves on down the line.

Already onto the next thing, the way kids are.

And she just... stands there a second.

Lets a breath out. Slow.

Because that was never on a single thing she measured.

Not on a test. Not in a gradebook. Not in one number she tracked for twenty-some years.

She looks up at the room.

All those new faces. The strong ones, the struggling ones. The sure and the lost.

The good, the not-yet-good. The ones she'd already, without meaning to, started to sort.

And it lands on her, quiet and enormous at once.

I've been looking at all of them.

The whole time.

With those eyes.

She didn't grow a second crop she'd missed.

She found out what she'd been seeing through, all along.

What the invoice said.

The invoice named one thing.

Life was asking payment for another.

A bill arrives.

Something arrives with it.

We pay the bill.

We pay for the bill.

She didn't get those years back.

All the kids who came through and never told her. All the ones who didn't have the words, or the chance.

That part's real. I won't pretend it isn't. It's a kind of bill, finding out late.

But look what was growing the whole time she thought the harvest was elsewhere.

Some of her best work was never on a page.

Some seeds are still underground in people she'll never hear from.

Some harvests belong to a season that hasn't come yet.

The field doesn't close just because the bell rang.

It's still growing. It always is.

Walk to the edge of your own field a minute.

We're almost done. No work here. Just look.

1.

Picture the work of your life. The big field — the one you've tended longest.

Stand at the edge of it. Look across.

2.

Some rows thrived. Some struggled. Some you're not sure about.

Just notice them. All of them. No grading.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

3.

Now — has anybody ever told you what you couldn't see?

A thing you grew in someone that you never measured, never knew.

Let it in this time. What was it?

4.

I'm not sure about every person reading this question.

But if you're the one I'm thinking of — maybe even the one this question was written for — would you look up and smile?

You stood at the edge of your field.

You saw every row, and graded none of them.

You let in a thing you'd been waving off.

And you looked up.

CARRY THIS.

This week, once, catch yourself looking at someone.

A kid. A coworker. The person across the table.

And just notice you have eyes too — that you're seeing them some particular way, right now.

You don't have to change it. Just notice it's happening.

That's the whole thing. That was always the whole thing.

NEXT LESSON.

The last one.

A letter or two. And a pen I'm going to hand to you.

See you in Lesson 8.



LESSON 8

The Pen

The last one. Today you do the writing. I'll just sit here.

Last one. You made it.

We've walked a lot of fields together. Garages and trees and tables and
a math teacher at orientation.

Today there's nothing for me to show you.

Today the pen's yours.

I'll just sit here while you use it.

There are two of you in this book.

One's been paying bills for years, mostly believing the bill was the
whole story.

One's reading this right now, and has started to wonder what's
growing.

Both of them are you.

Let's let them both have a say.

The first letter.

Write to the one who thought the invoice was the whole envelope.

No scolding. That one did the best they could with what they could see.

Tell them what you know now.

[illegible]

Don't fix it up. Let it sit there a minute.

The second letter.

Now the one reading this. The one who's started to notice.

Not a to-do list. Not a plan. You know better than that by now.

Just what you'd like them to keep an eye on, gently, as the bills keep coming.

[illegible]

Set them side by side. Both letters. Both yours.

Read them once, together.

You don't have to reconcile them.

They're both true.

Let them both be true.

That's all I've got for you.

The bills will keep coming.

I won't pretend otherwise.

We pay the bill.

We also pay for the bill.

Hmm...

Then:

Take your time with those letters.

I'll wait.

While you catch your breath, I'll tell you something I remembered.

Ran into a friend a while back. Hadn't seen him in years.

We talked in a parking lot longer than we meant to, the way you do.

And just before we split off he laughed and said,

"You know what's funny? I still get invoices."

I laughed. "Me too."

"Only difference is," he said, "I don't think they're invoices anymore."

I asked what he meant.

He looked out across the lot a second.

"I still get the doctor's appointment. The hard conversation. The thing that doesn't fit my plans.

The bill still shows up. But now..."

He smiled.

"I find myself wondering what's growing.

Not trying to be positive about it. Just — I know something always is."

We stood there a minute.

Then he said,

“Life didn’t get lighter, funny enough.

I just stopped believing the invoice was the whole envelope.”

Then his ride came, and he was gone, and I stood in the lot a second longer than I needed to.

That’s all I’ve got for you.

The bills will keep coming. I won’t pretend otherwise.

But you’ve got the pen now.

Something’s growing. Right now. While you read this.

Go see what it is.

Thanks for walking with me.

It meant more than you knew.

— David

A comment from the author.

Years working with people.

Never much liked wasted time.

Still don't.

Also prefer a more targeted focus.

Hence the domain.

Glad you stopped for a moment.

Hope something in here landed.

If not, hope you heard a good story.

Till we meet again.

Frank.

Caught Book Club Opportunity

There is no required way to do this.

Some people read the workbook on their own.

Some listen to the audio version.

Some do both.

Some groups read or listen together.

Some arrive having explored the lesson beforehand.

All are welcome.

Then meet.

Pull up a few chairs.

Have a coffee.

Take a walk.

Sit on a porch.

Leave an empty chair for David if you'd like.

Not because he has the answers.

Just because every now and then it helps to remember there is a quiet companion sitting with the conversation.

Ask a few questions.

What stood out?

What felt familiar?

What surprised you?

What might you be seeing differently?

What is the upside?

What is the downside?

What is the hmmm?

There is no need to agree.

There is no need to solve anything.

There is no need to leave with a plan.

Just look together for a little while.

Sometimes you will discover something about yourself.

Sometimes you will discover something about another person.

Sometimes you will discover something about the room.

Sometimes you will simply notice something sooner than you might have.

Then look up.

Smile.

Take a picture if you'd like.

And carry on.

That is enough.

Frank keeps the intention simple. If this work helps twenty more people, that will be enough.

You may read it free.

You may listen free.

You may find the physical book.

You may share it with someone else.

THE CAUGHT SOONER HOUSE

SOONER

Caught Paying the Bill

Caught Waiting

Caught Recovering

Caught Being

Caught Wanting

Caught Forgiving

28 Days · A Journal

Caught Leading

The audio

Caught Graduating

If something in these pages landed,

there's more on the porch.

Come sit awhile.

CAUGHTSOONER.COM