

# He Speaks to Me Everywhere



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A ReVision Study  
From The Fellowship of Ailbe

*He Speaks to Me Everywhere*

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## Welcome to *He Speaks to Me Everywhere*

Theology is the disciplined pursuit of the knowledge of God and His glory. By that definition, every believer is a theologian. And we're all called to be the best theologians we can be, given our callings in the Kingdom.

Creational theology is one of the theological disciplines by which we may grow in the knowledge of God and improve in living for His glory. Creational theology involves us interacting with God's revelation of Himself in creation and culture, so that we hear and see Him as He makes Himself known in the things He has made.

But most Christians don't practice this discipline. For those who would like to, however, this study can get you started on the right foot.

There is much glory to be discerned in the world around us, if only we're willing to take the time and practice the skills that can bring us into the Lord's presence with new power and joy. The brief lessons that follow are designed to help you begin making creational theology a regular part of your spiritual life.

*ReVision* studies are designed as brief introductions to the subject under consideration. We hope they will enlarge your worldview, help you to become more firmly rooted in Scripture, equip you to minister to others, and stimulate you to want to learn more about the Word of God and the Biblical worldview.

We're happy to provide this study at no charge. If you find these studies helpful, we hope you'll consider sending a gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, to help us in making these resources available to others.

May the Lord bless your study of His Word.

T. M. Moore  
Principal

## 1 The Book of Creation

*The heavens declare the glory of God;  
And the firmament shows His handiwork.  
Day unto day utters speech,  
And night unto night reveals knowledge.  
There is no speech nor language  
Where their voice is not heard.  
Their line has gone out through all the earth,  
And their words to the end of the world.* Psalm 19.1-4

### *Revelation in creation*

Christians insist that the Bible is the Word of God, that it reveals Him and His will, and can, as the Spirit of God employs it, equip those who believe in Jesus for lives of good works (2 Tim. 3.15-17). *All* Scripture is inspired of God, and therefore *everything* Scripture teaches should inform and nurture our walk with and work for the Lord Jesus Christ.

One overlooked teaching of Scripture is that the Bible is not the only source of revelation about God and His will. The Bible explains that the world of creation bears witness to God, and teaches us how to think about Him and His purposes (cf. Acts 14.17; Ps. 145.1-11). The Scriptures are the great light of divine revelation, but the creation is a lesser light, no less important or rewarding when rightly understood in the light of Christ and His Word (Ps. 36.9).

In the beloved hymn “This is My Father’s World” Maltbie B. Babcock celebrates the revelation of God that confronts us throughout the creation. The rocks and trees, skies and seas, birds, sun, lilies, and even the rustling grass declare the presence, beauty, order, and wisdom of God, ultimately pointing to the supreme manifestation of the love of God in Jesus Christ, and calling us to wonder, worship, and witness.

The world and everything in it declares the glory of God! But though God is speaking – pouring forth speech through all the earth, according to the psalmist (vv. 2, 4) – most of us have never learned how to listen, or how to observe the workings of God as He upholds the cosmos and everything in it by His Word of power (Heb. 1.13).

### *Are we paying attention?*

God is revealing Himself in the things He has made, but few people are listening (Rom. 1.18-21).

The creation is a vast book of revelation, in which there is much to learn about the Lord and His plan. Here is a rich resource of divine insight and wisdom which, could we learn to read it, like we read the Scriptures, we would find our walk with the Lord greatly enriched.

The creation in its natural setting is not alone as a source of divine revelation. The cultural works of people also show forth the glory of God. The Scriptures teach that God is the Giver of every good and perfect cultural gift, and He delights to inhabit even the cultural products of those who count themselves His enemies (Jms. 1.17; Ps. 68.18), for bearing witness to Himself and making His glory known.

We are surrounded every day by illuminating missives from the heavenly throne, calling us to pause, reflect, encounter the glory of the Lord, and be transformed into the image of Christ.

The discipline of learning to “read” the revelation of God in creation and culture can be referred to as

*creational theology*. It presents a vast field of endeavor and should be part, in some measure, of every believer's regimen of spiritual disciplines. God is glorified by revealing Himself in the things He has made; we may experience and celebrate that glory as we look and listen for it through the disciplines of creational theology (Prov. 25.2).

*Creational theology*

By understanding and applying ourselves to six practices, we can make creational theology a part of our everyday walk with the Lord, to know the presence, promise, and power of the Lord flashing forth and oozing around us. Because the Lord speaks to us everywhere, He is always inviting us to begin the process of drawing close to Him, no matter where we are or what we're doing. Glimpses of glory and insights of intimacy await us through the revelation of God in creation, but we must be willing to embrace those practices which can give us access to the hidden things of the Lord.

Those who practice the discipline of creational theology find that they more aware of and in communion with the Lord throughout the day. Further, their reading of Scripture is enriched by the experiences, gained from the world of creation and culture, they bring into their daily devotions and meditations. We need not deprive ourselves of the rich bounty of divine revelation that beckons us throughout the day. By taking up the practice of creational theology, we can know the wonder and glory of God more intimately and consistently, as He speaks to us everywhere, in the wordless voices of creation.

*For reflection*

1. What does the Scripture mean by saying that God reveals Himself in creation? What should we expect to glimpse of God by studying creation more carefully?
2. Meditate on Psalm 111.2. Why do you suppose more Christians don't "have pleasure" in the works of God? If we did, do you think we would study the creation more carefully, and with more benefit? Explain.
3. The Bible is God's *clearest* and *most comprehensive* Word to us, while creation is *supplemental* and *reinforcing*. Do you think your appreciation of Scripture would be enhanced by a more careful consideration of the revelation of God in creation? Explain.

*Next steps – Preparation: Get a journal or a few 3x5 cards to use for the duration of this brief introductory study. Keep these with you, so that you can jot down observations and reflections. Tell a Christian friend what you're doing, and ask your friend to pray for you for the next week.*

## 2 Observation

*If He goes by me, I do not see Him;  
If He moves past, I do not perceive Him...* Job 9.11

### *A witness in creation*

Imagine the puzzled looks on the faces of those pagans in Lystra, as the Apostle Paul declared to them that “the living God, Who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them,” had left a “witness” to Himself in the annual harvests, and the food and gladness He had granted these people from time out of mind (Acts 14.14-18).

“What’s he talking about?” they must have asked one another.

The people of Lystra had been sowing, harvesting, walking their fields, preparing their meals, enjoying their table, and having a good old time of it, all in the presence of the God of heaven and earth, and yet they didn’t have a clue. God was going by them and around them, moving in and through the work of their hands, but they could not see Him. He was bearing witness to Himself, leaving a trail of evidence that should have induced the people of Lystra to seek Him (Acts 17.26, 27), but, like Job in his distractedness, they did not perceive Him.

Most of us are just like Job and those pagans. God is speaking to us everywhere, going on ahead of us, flashing forth from niches, nooks, and crannies, moving on before, beside, and behind us, but we are not in the least mindful of His presence. We just aren’t paying attention. We fail to note His presence or to discern the revelation that He pours out, day by day and night by night, to tell us of His glory and love. So we miss abundant opportunities for engaging God in His glory, leading to wonder and worship, and making us better prepared to relay His witness to the people around us.

### *Learning to read creation*

Creational theology is the discipline that can help us learn to “read” the book of creation and culture, and the work of creational theology begins by training our eyes to see and our ears to hear the witness God is speaking to us everywhere.

Creational theology begins in observation.

Those who want to observe the revelation of God will need a notebook or a stack of 3 x 5 cards, and keep them at the ready. We won’t always remember what we’ve seen, much less take the time to reflect on any observations; but if we jot down even the slightest impressions, these can lead to fruitful seasons of hearing the voice of God in the things He has made. And these meditations will make us more sensitive to the presence of God, so that we may perceive Him more readily, and enjoy Him more completely.

But what should we observe? First, *sounds*: “This is my Father’s world, and to my list’ning ears, all nature sings...” The ominous rumble of an approaching thunderstorm, the hum and whirl of a well-tuned engine, the sweet whisper of a gentle breeze, a lilting melody, the various songs of garden birds – all these and more can provoke us to ponder the wonder, mystery, majesty, and delight of God. Write down the sound, how it appeared to you, how it made you feel, or what you thought of when you heard it.

Next, *sights*: “the morning light, the lilies white, declare their Maker’s praise...” Note the gentle, sloping lines of a mountain ridge, the symmetry of a beautiful tree, the destruction of a natural habitat by flood or fire – reminders of the consequences of the fall – even the different smiles of the people we see each day.

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Write down colors – how many different shades of yellow, orange, and red can you note in an autumn forest? Note the shapes and sizes of birds, flowers, and foods.

Then let your senses of taste, touch, and smell be enlisted in this royal quest to discover the glory that God has concealed in the things He has made (Prov. 25.2). Touch a fallen leaf, and note its texture; savor the smells emanating from the kitchen as dinner is being prepared; note the taste, texture, and temperature of the food you eat. Jot it down. Describe it as best you can. Together, our senses can become a research team for making notes or sketches, recording immediate impressions, raising questions to ponder – all of which can become fodder for deeper meditation at more convenient times.

*Just observe*

To begin the work of creational theology, don't worry about trying to discover something "theological" in your observations; simply get them down as fully and as clearly as you can. Look carefully, note well, and don't take for granted anything about the world around you. God is moving, working, and bearing witness to Himself as surely in our experience as in that of the people of Lystra to whom Paul spoke.

There will be time later to layer on the insights of Scripture, and to ladle over your observations the theological and cultural tradition of the faith. Remember that, in a good painting, a well-crafted poem, or a powerful musical composition, nothing is included by chance. Every line, phrase, stroke, note, color, meter, and rest has something to bring to the glory of the whole.

How much truer is this of the creation all around, where our Lord Jesus Christ continually upholds and renews His creation by His powerful Word (Heb. 1.3)?

God is speaking to us everywhere, every day of our lives. Let us not be so distracted by our own agendas, or become so accustomed to our daily routines, that we fail to perceive Him present with us, near us, in and around us, and bearing witness to His glory, and beckoning us to know Him better.

*For reflection*

1. Do you believe that God is bearing witness to Himself in creation and culture? Why is He doing this?
2. Think back over the past 24 hours. What might you have jotted down as an observation to reflect on at some later time? What did you hear or see that might have been the Lord, bearing witness to you?
3. How can making observations like this help us in learning to pray without ceasing? If this is the *only* benefit we gain from being more observant, would it be worth the effort? Explain.

*Next steps – Conversation: Look at a space one foot square, right where you are, right now. Jot down what you see. Thank God for what you see. Keep your observation with you throughout the day, and take it out and meditate on it, asking the Lord to bear witness of Himself to you. Before the day is over, share your observation with a Christian friend or family member.*



### 3 Association

*Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters...* Revelation 1.12-15

*This, like that*

The efficiency of language depends in large part on metaphor, on comparing something known and familiar with something less well known, to bring the clarity of the one to the task of illuminating the other. When we use a metaphor, we're trying to "make sense of the new and unknown in terms of the old and known," as Douglas Hofstadter and Emmanuel Sander put it in their book, *Surfaces and Essences*. The authors continue, in writing about metaphor – or thinking by analogy – "the human ability to make analogies lies at the root of all our concepts."

We make sense of new or unfamiliar things by *associating* them, in specific ways, with old and familiar things. In seeking to understanding something difficult or new, we say "this is like that," and thus our understanding grows.

God made us to think in these ways, and so it's not surprising that, in revealing Himself and His will, He makes large use of analogies and metaphors, such as the string of similes presented in Revelation 1.12-15.

*God's use of metaphor*

Throughout the Scriptures God uses referents from the created world, including culture, to reveal Himself, His attributes, or His plan.

God's people are like arrows, to subdue His enemies (Zech. 9.12). His voice is like the thunder and roar of mighty oceans (Ps. 29.3, 4). His wisdom is like the ant, and His presence everywhere is like the lizard (Prov. 24-28). Jesus employed a wide range of analogies to teach us how to think about the Kingdom of God. It's like a net, He said, or a pearl, or treasure, or seed, or field, and so forth. His people are like sheep, or like the various members of our bodies.

God wants us to know Him, and so He speaks to us in familiar terms and says, "I'm like that." He expects us to make the *associations* between what we know and He wants us to learn by thinking carefully about what He says.

As we begin observing the creation and culture around us, recording the daily minutiae that greet our eyes or fall on our ears, we can *associate* our observations with specific aspects of the character and purposes of God, by understanding how God uses such referents in Scripture to reveal Himself.

*The guiding Word*

"This is my Father's world: I rest me in the thought of rocks and trees, of skies and seas..."

As you are reading your Bible, use your creational theology notebook to jot down instances in which God refers to Himself or His Kingdom by metaphor or analogy – this is like that. Develop a catalog of these references, adding Scripture from various places to each item in your catalog as you come across it.

Make a point to reflect at length on these images, as part of your discipline of meditation. What is God saying

about Himself or His will or Kingdom in each of the entries in your catalog? Why, for example, is an arrow a good way of thinking about God's people? What do arrows do that helps us to understand our mission and calling? Jot down your thoughts as you meditate.

Or how is God like roaring waters (Ps. 29, Rev. 1)? Or a flowing river (Pss. 1, 46; Jn. 7.37-39)? What do you know about such aspects of creation that help you know God better? How does God want you to think about Him, given what you know about these very familiar, everyday objects and experiences?

By associating your observations with similar referents in God's Word, you can train your mind to discern the light of God's glory in your daily observations. Scripture must be the touchstone and standard for all our work in creational theology, so the more time you invest in listing and meditating on creational referents, as you come across them in Scripture, the better equipped you'll be to search out the hidden glory of God in your daily observations.

A powerful windstorm has just blown through our peaceful valley community. Trees were uprooted. Power lines came down. Our home shook in the dark morning hours of near-hurricane-force wind. We should not fail to appreciate the power of such events to remind us of God's greatness and mercy. Through His voice in the creation, God calls us to *wonder* about His might, *worship* Him for His majesty and mercy, and bear *witness* to Him from these "mere edges of His ways" (Job 26.14).

"He speaks to me everywhere," Maltbie B. Babcock insisted. Because He speaks in metaphors, we can use these to guide us in reflecting on everyday observations; and using these as springboards for association, discover in the various aspects of our experience, portals to the glory of the living God.

*For reflection*

1. Let's think about a river, for example. God uses this metaphor to help us understand Him. What about a river suggests how we should think about God?
2. Jesus used seeds to help us think about the Kingdom of God. Why is a seed like the Kingdom? How does this metaphor help you think about the coming of the Kingdom in your life?
3. By associating God's use of creation and culture to reveal Himself in His Word, we can become more aware of the ways He is revealing Himself in creation and culture around us. A mindset of *association* will develop in us that can often yield surprising insights to God from things we see and hear each day. Explain.

*Next steps – Transformation: Take one of the metaphors mentioned in this article by which God reveals Himself – wind, water, fire, etc. – or His Kingdom – seeds, treasure, arrows, etc. Meditate on this metaphor, thinking about it in as much detail as you can, praying your thoughts back to God as you meditate. What makes this a particularly helpful way of thinking about God? How does this exercise help you in developing a mindset of association?*

## 4 Integration

*And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised.* Ecclesiastes 1.13

*Here's a wonder*

Folks who live along the Appalachians are familiar with common wood sorrel (see the cover illustration). It is often mistaken for clover, but it's not. This little plant shows up everywhere in our yard. It's quite lovely, with those green, three-lobed leaves, and that little yellow flower, standing out like a banner. I'll let several patches of it grow in our gardens, but much of my weeding goes to keeping the little beauty in check.

God is revealing Himself in this little wild flower. Its tenacity reminds me of the faithfulness of God. The vivid green color speaks of life. The three, heart-shaped leaves, clustered together look like a little love-letter from the triune God. And that single flower, rising above the leaves, seems to say, "Hey you, look here, observe, and wonder!"

Weeding common sorrel is an exercise in thanksgiving, for while the grass of the field may bloom for a moment, only to be uprooted and cast aside, still, in its rustling loveliness, I hear Him pass Who gives to all His creatures life and glory.

Creational theology helps us to see the world as created, endowed, and sustained by God, so that even the humblest creature can afford an opportunity for wonder, worship, and witness.

*Made to see His glory*

Solomon was wise because he understood that everything on earth has its proper place in the divine scheme of things – "under the heavens," as he put it. Everything we see or hear, every experience and fact of creation, all have their place in the divine economy (Eccl. 3.1-8), from the rarest and most extravagant orchid to the common wood sorrel.

God has put eternity in our hearts, so that we can peer through temporal reality into the eternal presence of God, to know Him and His world, if only imperfectly, using the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2.16; Eccl. 3.11). By observing the world carefully, and looking for associations in Scripture for what we've observed, we're tuning our hearts to see the glory and sing the praise of God more consistently.

As we press ahead in our work of creational theology, we will want to *integrate* our observations with the Scriptural associations to which they relate. In this step, we will offer a concise statement concerning the glory of God which we have discerned, revealed in the things He has made.

*Find the words*

The activity of *integration* involves putting into words what we have observed in creation, and how the associations we've made from the Scriptures relate to those observations. Write down in your journal what you have discerned of the glory of God in your observations. By doing so, we make a statement concerning our encounter with the Lord and His glory, and what He has spoken to us from the things we have seen.

Such conclusions are tentative and personal. You may not see common wood sorrel as a love letter from the Trinity, but I do, every time. Our integrative statements are not to be considered *normative* revelation, that is, on the same level of Scripture. Rather, they provide a means for *heightening* our wonder at God, enhancing our *understanding* of Him, deepening our *worship* of Him, and giving us a means to *bear witness* to His presence with us.

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Our world is, in many ways, out of sorts and wrong – not what God intends it to be. But we may reflect from such observations that “This is my Father’s world: the battle is not done...” God is still bringing His redemptive work to the creation as we, His people, take up the good works for which He has redeemed us in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8.19-21; Eph. 2.10), and declare His glory as we encounter it in even the humblest of His creatures (Hab. 2.14).

By *integrating* your observations with Scriptural associations, you train yourself to respond to the “voice” of God as He speaks to you everywhere. A passing thunderstorm over sun-burnt grass says, “I will never fail you nor forsake you; wait on Me, and do not despair.” The reliability of your office computer, and the fruitful work it allows you to produce, speak of the steadfast love and faithfulness of God, Who never sleeps, and Who uses our work to glorify His Name (Ps. 90.16, 17; 1 Cor. 10.31).

Once you have matched your observations with relevant Scripture, integrate them into a statement, prayerfully considered, carefully crafted, and boldly set forth, that will be a record of how you have encountered the glory of God in your daily journey with the Lord, as He speaks to you everywhere.

*For reflection*

1. Let’s have a go at a simple statement: What do you see of the glory of God in a beautiful sunset?
2. I find that writing things down tends to impress them more solidly on my soul. Do you think that writing some statement about your observations, recording your experience of the glory of God, could enhance your observational skills? Explain.
3. How can writing out these integrative statements help you to be ready to share a word of witness?

*Next steps – Conversation: Share your answer to question 1 with some Christian friends. Ask them to reply to the question. Talk about the glory of God and why you experience it this way. Give thanks to the Lord together.*

## 5 Meditation

*One thing I have desired of the LORD,  
That will I seek:  
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD  
All the days of my life,  
To behold the beauty of the LORD,  
And to inquire in His temple. Psalm 27.4*

*Wait for it*  
We are not good at waiting.

Standing in lines. Creeping along in traffic. Watching the clock. Fuming over slow progress bars, upgrades, or downloads. No, we just don't like having to wait.

But waiting is good for us. God instructs us to wait, as in Psalm 27.14:

*Wait on the LORD;  
Be of good courage,  
And He shall strengthen your heart;  
Wait, I say, on the LORD!*

In Psalm 25.4, 5, David insisted he would wait all day for the Lord to lead him into his truth.

Wait all day? Yes, if necessary, or over a period of many days, waiting for the Lord to reveal Himself, show us His glory, renew us in His strength, and cause us to soar with joy in knowing Him:

*But those who wait on the LORD  
Shall renew their strength;  
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
They shall run and not be weary,  
They shall walk and not faint. Isaiah 40.31*

Waiting on the Lord is the work of *meditation*. With respect to creational theology, meditation finds us asking the Lord to turn our observations of the creation, and the associations and integration we have made of those, into an enlarged and enhanced sense of His *presence*, and a transforming *experience* of His glory.

*Waiting for the goodness of the Lord*

The word, *inquire* in our text can also be translated *meditate*. *Meditation* is the fourth practice of creational theology. In meditation, we come before the Lord in silence, seeking the beauty and goodness of the Lord, waiting on His Spirit to carry us beyond mere description to a deeper level of experience and encounter with His glory. Building on our observations of creation, and drawing on our Scriptural associations and our integrating statement, in meditation we seek to become *immersed* in the presence of God, completely absorbed in His beauty, goodness, truth, and glory. The key to meditation is what the psalmist declares at the end of Psalm 27:

*I would have lost heart, unless I had believed  
That I would see the goodness of the Lord*

*In the land of the living.*

We believe God has embedded His glory in our observation. He has lodged His goodness there, and we have made a preliminary stab at describing it. Now we want to *experience* His glory, and for this, we must be willing to wait. We will not give up, and we will not despair, because we believe God wants us to know His glory (Hab. 2.14). So we wait.

*The practice of meditation*

How does this work? In meditation, we begin with our integrating statement: In that cluster of common wood sorrel is a love greeting from the triune God. Now we want to extend that confident conclusion to consider other areas. Yes, God waves His greeting to us in the plants in our yards. And in the colors, flight, and songs of birds, in clouds traversing the sky overhead, and in every good and perfect gift of culture by which He sustains and enriches our lives. His goodness abounds to us on every hand, as He greets us continually with gifts and gestures of love. Our sense of God's goodness is heightened as we realize we are swarmed by it every moment of our lives.

Reflecting on many such expressions of God's presence and goodness makes that experience of wood sorrel richer and more powerful, like the exuberant piccolo solo, rising above the many instrumental voices of Sousa's *Stars and Stripes Forever*. We become increasingly sensitive to the glory of God, pressing on us at all times, and we rejoice in and give thanks to Him.

I find it helpful in times of meditation to journal my thoughts back to the Lord, beginning with that integrating proposition or idea, and extending it to include other observations, as deep and as far into the goodness of the Lord as it will go. As I journal, other Scriptures come to mind as well as additional observations, casting even more light on my experience and reminding me of other, complementary attributes of God or aspects of His will.

If I wait long enough, listening carefully for the prompting of God's Spirit, soon enough He will put me in mind of specific attitudes from which I need to repent, new reasons to worship Him, or new courses of action I might take to show His steadfast love and faithfulness more consistently, to greet others with the love and exuberance with which He greets me. Meditation deepens wonder, prompts us to worship, and readies us for witness in our daily lives.

Wait on the Lord to make Himself and His glory known, and you will indeed soar with new strength.

*For reflection*

1. What role does meditation – extended periods of waiting on the Lord in silence – have in your spiritual life?
2. Why does God make us wait? What good should we expect to know from having to wait on the Lord?
3. Choose an observation you have made recently. What associations can you find in Scripture? What do you conclude about the glory of God in this? Wait on the Lord with this observation, until He brings you into His glory. What else does He show you there?

*Next steps – Transformation: Begin making time for meditation in your spiritual life. Learn to wait patiently for the Lord to show you His beauty and goodness. Share an experience of entering the Lord's glory through meditation with a Christian friend.*

## 6 Celebration

*The works of the LORD are great,  
Studied by all who have pleasure in them.  
His work is honorable and glorious,  
And His righteousness endures forever.  
He has made His wonderful works to be remembered...* Psalm 111.2-4

### *Keep a record*

The first time I took note of common wood sorrel, I was cutting the yard. Of course, I'd seen it often enough before, but I never *noticed* it before this day. I was edging around the mail box, when I observed this small, bright yellow flower, standing out against the green background. It seemed to call out to me, "Hey!" I bent down, spread the blades of grass apart, and studied those green leaves, clustered in a threesome around that yellow blossom. I was captivated by its simple beauty, precise symmetry, and what struck me as its indomitable cheeriness.

I thought about that little flower and its accompanying leaflets as I finished the yard. My mind ran to the lilies of the field, grass that withers, the green tree and the dry, the Lord's witness to the people of Lystra, and more Scripture associations. I was beginning to derive some insight to glory from that humble plant. I kept thinking about it as I cleaned up, then did some quick research online. I took out my journal and wrote, making a preliminary stab at integration:

*Oxalis montana, May 23, 2013, common wood sorrel – in the mown grass beneath our mailbox in Hamilton (VA). Note the heart-shaped leaves in clusters of three: a symbol of the perfect and persisting love of our triune God.*

Then I headed back outside, my phone in hand, and took several close-up pictures. These I imported to my journal as a permanent record of my encounter. Like all the other entries in my creational theology journal, I visit this one from time to time, to be renewed in the glory of that first encounter.

### *Make a memory*

If you've gotten this far in the practice of creational theology, then you'll have experienced some new and very exciting insights into the glory of the Lord. Careful observation, prayerful association of your observations with Scripture, then integrating your observations and associations into a statement of conclusion, expanded by meditation into your daily experience – these activities can lead to deeper joy and greater awareness of the Lord. And whenever I get to that place in my walk with the Lord, it's time to celebrate.

*Celebration* is the next activity toward completing the circuit in the practice of creational theology.

How do we celebrate what God is teaching us through His "two books" of revelation – creation and Scripture? Personally, corporately, and with a memorial. What do I mean?

First, *personally*: Obviously, the place to begin in celebration is by making a record of your encounter with the Lord and His glory. Write out your experience in your journal, and you'll find it becomes more concrete and memorable. Use this as an opportunity to worship the Lord. Find a hymn that expresses your experience, and sing it until you know some of it by heart: "In the rustling grass, I see Him pass; He speaks to me everywhere." Each time you sing that hymn, or review your journal entry, you'll remember that experience of encountering God.

*He Speaks to Me Everywhere*

Let that experience of God's glory carry over into your daily worship. Pray daily with thanksgiving and praise, celebrating God's love for you, Who cares enough to make Himself known with such intimacy and power.

Then, *corporately*: Bring your experience to church on the Lord's Day, and let your encounter with the Lord prepare you for public worship. Offer it as a testimony in your Sunday school class or Bible study group. Let others "in the assembly of the upright and *in* the congregation" share in the joy and glory you've experienced (Ps. 111.1).

*A memorial*

I'm encouraging you to make a memorial to commemorate this experience, so that you have a place to return to and relive it, like Jacob setting up the altar at Bethel, to which he frequently returned, as had his grandfather before him. If you were invited to dinner with a famous person, you'd seek an autograph, a photo op, or a souvenir napkin. Why not do the same for those times God brings you into His glory?

A memorial is something more specific than just a journal entry. Like the memorial stones that Israel piled on the west bank of the Jordan, it draws from a variety of forms or genre to create a memory more vivid and enduring than something merely written. Write a prayer to carry with you, which you might offer to the Lord throughout the day. Compose a poem, and memorize it. Use it as an oasis for brief refreshing periods of prayer during your day. Take a picture of what you observed. Set it on your desk, hang it on a wall, or place it in an album. Paint a picture, write a story, or make a sculpture of your experience.

We are made in the image of God; thus, we are made to be creators, as He is our Creator. Creational theology can provide plenty of inspiration and substance for celebrating the Lord, both in worship and in the creation of memorials of various kinds to honor Him. The wonder you invest in this effort, and the worship it elicits, can prepare you to bear witness to the glory of God in the things He's speaking to you everywhere.

*For reflection*

1. Israel often made memorials of times they experienced God's glory and power. Why did they do this?
2. It takes time, thought, and effort to make a memorial. Why does this make memorials a particularly good way of celebrating your experience of God's glory?
3. We use family photo albums to relive good times and explain family to friends. Could you do the same with a creational theology album? Explain.

*Next steps – Preparation: What kinds of memorials most appeal to you? Do you need to make a memorial of something you've observed and meditated on this week?*



## 7 Proclamation

*Does not wisdom cry out,  
And understanding lift up her voice?  
She takes her stand on the top of the high hill,  
Beside the way, where the paths meet.  
She cries out by the gates, at the entry of the city,  
At the entrance of the doors... Proverbs 8.1-3*

### *Love in Triplets*

For my memorial of the experience of meeting God in His glory in common wood sorrel, I wrote the following poem:

### Love in Triplets

*The Witness of the Common Wood Sorrel*

The Father says, "I love you, child."  
But those by baser things beguiled  
ignore the witness of things wild.

The Son extends His hands to say,  
"I love you, child; come, walk My way."  
We nail His hands, then turn astray.

The Spirit, armed with saving grace,  
"I love you!" says, right in your face  
and takes your heart in His embrace.

So when that small, bright bloom you see –  
that lure waved by the Deity –  
then let those leaflets, one in three,  
proclaim God's love, unhurriedly.

I posted the poem, together with one of the pictures I took, on one of my nature apps. I've also published it in a book of poems, *Bricks and Rungs*. By doing so I was fulfilling the final step of the process of creational theology, serving as a docent of the glory of God, proclaiming His glory by whatever means are available.

### *Wisdom cries*

Jesus Christ is the Wisdom of God. The voice of Wisdom, crying out in Proverbs 8 – in the streets, around the corners, at every crossroads, in all of creation – is the voice of the Word of God, even our Lord Jesus Christ. The work of creational theology is not complete until, spurred on and enlightened by our encounter with God, we *proclaim* the glory of Christ and His saving work to anyone and everyone who will listen. "This is my Father's world: the battle is not done; Jesus who died will be satisfied..."

We are like docents in an art museum, ready to help anyone to have a better experience of what they're viewing. We began this study by saying that, though God is speaking to us everywhere, few of us are listening. We are the voices of Wisdom to the people of our day, appointed by Christ to bear witness to Him. That includes, like Paul in Lystra, pointing out the witness to wisdom, beauty, goodness, truth, love, and glory that Christ has left in the creation around us.

Jonathan Edwards, the great Puritan preacher of the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, used to go on sorties of creational theology. He'd get on his horse with little slips of paper in hand, as well as a pocket full of straight pins. Every time something in the creation spoke to him, he'd write it down on a piece of paper and pin it to his coat or hat. At times, he would return home from these retreats into the woods looking like he was covered with snow. Then he would head to his study to meditate on his observations, rather like we have been suggesting in this series. At last, one or more of his experiences with the glory of God in creation would find their way into Edwards' sermons, where they would be used as illustrations to focus the minds of hearers on the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Edwards proclaimed the glory of God in creation, and so must we.

*It's all about Jesus*

All revelation is from God – whether in creation or Scripture – and finds its ultimate meaning in Christ; He is the key to Scripture and the point toward which all creation moves. Our work of creational theology is finished when we have connected what God has shown us from the world with the finished work of Christ, His exalted reign in glory, or His imminent and final return. Thus the world and everything in it, which were called into being by the Word of God (Jn. 1.1-3), realizes its unique fulfillment by proclaiming the Wisdom of God, with the help of God's people.

Christ the Wisdom of God calls to the hearts of men and women from every nook and cranny, every niche and corner, of the vast creation. Our task is to see for them what they cannot see for themselves, then to help them discover the One Who cries out to them from the things He has made.

Thus the work of creational theology moves from observation and association, through integration and meditation, to celebration and proclamation as a seamless cloth of glorious encounter with the living God. As He speaks to us everywhere, provoking us to wonder and worship, we go forth from His glory to bear witness to Him by every available means.

*For reflection*

1. What outlets – social media, email, study group, etc. – are available to you for proclaiming the glory of God which you encounter in creation?
2. What is a doцент? How is the Christian's calling to the Kingdom and glory of God (1 Thess. 2.12) like that of a doцент?
3. How can Christians encourage one another in the work of creational theology?

*Next steps – Conversation: Talk with a few Christian friends about what you're learning about creational theology. Why is it important that we practice this discipline?*

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. What do we mean by *creational theology*? What does it have to do with creation? In what sense is it a form of theology?
2. What do we expect to gain from more careful and consistent practice of creational theology? Can you be specific?
3. What are the six practices that go into the discipline of creational theology? Have you begun to incorporate these into your spiritual life?
4. How are Christians like docents to the people around them? What can prevent us from fulfilling this role?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this study? How are you putting that lesson to work in your life?

*For prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org) to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the contribute button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.