

The Mind of Christ In His World: Part 1



T.M. Moore

A ReVision Resource

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Mind of Christ in His World: Part 1
Strong Souls Part 15
Copyright 2022 T. M. Moore and Susie Moore

Waxed Tablet Publications

Except as indicated, Scripture taken from the New King James Version. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Contents

Welcome to <i>The Mind of Christ in His World: Part 1</i>	4
1 Speaking Everywhere	5
2 Observation	7
3 Association	9
4 Integration	11
5 Meditation	13
6 Celebration	15
7 Proclamation	18
Questions for Reflection or Discussion	21

Welcome to *The Mind of Christ in His World: Part 1*

What kinds of things shape the way we think? The contours of our brains? The disposition of our mind?

Certainly, the world around us has effects on us. And when we stop to remember that God is making His glory known through the things of the world, then we realize how important it is that we know how to let His works speak to us to nurture in us a sound mind and a strong soul.

Creational theology is the field of study that helps us bring our minds into submission to God as He speaks to us through His world (2 Cor. 3.5). In this first part of learning to yield our minds to God through His works, we'll consider how creational theology can be an informative, delightful, and life-changing exercise for us.

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 Speaking Everywhere

*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

Sound mind, strong soul

A sound mind is crucial to a strong soul. Sound minds are formed by sound doctrine, and Scripture is the primary source for sound doctrine. If we are like the simple man mentioned in Psalm 119.130, we will open our minds wide to the light of understanding sound doctrine can bring to us.

While Scripture is our primary source of sound doctrine, we can also benefit from the thinking and writing of those, past and present, who have devoted themselves to the study of sound doctrine. We should not neglect the insights from our forebears and contemporaries as we work to fit our minds with the best teaching we can find.

A sound mind is formed by the revelation of God, beginning with that revelation that comes from His Word. But God also reveals Himself in His works, and in the works He has enabled people to do. In other words, reation and culture can play a role in helping to shape a sound mind, because we may expect to see God's glory there and to have our minds further fitted for serving Him.

God revealed in creation

The wonderful hymn "[This is My Father's World](#)" celebrates the revelation of God that confronts us through the works of 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, as with all divine revelation and instruction, these all point to the supreme manifestation of the wisdom, power, goodness, and love of God in Jesus Christ.

These works of creation can speak to us of the mind of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because we believe in Him, we have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2.16). We long to be renewed in His mind and to grow toward maturity in our thinking. While we certainly expect to learn the mind of Christ from the things He has *written*, we should also expect to learn the mind of Christ from the things He has *made*. We spend *some* time every day in the *Word* of God, yet we are *continually* in His *world* – our Father's world – where the mind of Christ and His glory are being revealed on every hand.

The world and everything in it declare the glory of God; our problem is, though God is speaking – uttering speech, as the psalmist has it (v. 2) – we don't know how to listen. We haven't learned the "language" of creation or how to exegete its revelation. Because the universe and everything in it are upheld by the Lord Jesus' Word of power (Heb. 1.3), we may expect to discover something of His mind in these works, something that can aid us in nurturing a strong soul and growing to maturity in the Lord.

The book of creation

While the Scriptures are a *written* Book of divine revelation, the creation is a *living* book of revelation, in which there is much to learn about the Lord and His wonderful plan. Here is a rich resource of divine insight and wisdom which, could we but learn to read it, like we read the Scriptures, we would find our walk with the

Lord greatly enriched, and we would understand more of the mind of Christ to aid in the renewing of our minds.

And not only the creation in its *natural* setting; the *culture* that people make and use also shows the glory of God. The Scriptures teach that God is the Giver of every good and perfect gift, including gifts of culture, and He delights to inhabit the cultural products even of those who count themselves His enemies (Jms. 1.17; Ps. 68.18).

Thus, while we only spend a *limited* amount of time each day in the Word of Christ – important and valuable time, to be sure, the lessons from which we want to carry with us in all our time – we are at *all* times immersed in the *world* over which our Lord rules as King, and through which He makes His mind and glory known. It is the glory of God to have *hidden* His glory and mind in the things of creation; it is the glory of us His children to *discover* these and to grow in them (Prov. 25.2). Learning to train our minds for seeing God's glory is a sure way to being renewed in the mind of Christ.

Creational theology

We are surrounded every day by missives of revelation from the heavenly throne, calling us to pause, reflect, encounter the glory of the Lord, discern the mind 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 is called *creational theology*. It is a glorious field of endeavor and should be part, at least in some measure, of every believer's regimen of spiritual disciplines.

Creational theology consists of six disciplines that can enable us to discern the glory and mind of Christ in His world. By learning to practice these disciplines, we can make creational theology part of our everyday walk with the Lord.

And the exciting thing about creational theology is this: Because the Lord speaks to us everywhere, He is always inviting us to draw close to Him, no matter where we are or what we're doing. Those who practice the discipline of creational theology find that, not only are they more aware of the Presence of the Lord throughout the day, but their reading of Scripture is enriched by the experiences of God's glory gained from the world of creation and culture.

While we seek the mind of the Lord daily in His Word, we may also seek Him and His glory in His world. There is no reason to deprive ourselves of the rich bounty of divine revelation that awaits us throughout the day. If we can learn the disciplines involved in creational theology and make them part of our daily fellowship with the Lord, we'll find that we are continually stimulated for the renewing of our minds in the mind of Christ.

For reflection

1. What is the glory of God? What is it like to experience the glory of God? How does the glory of God, as we experience it, lead us to a deeper understanding of the mind of Christ?
2. Have you ever had the sense of encountering God's glory in some aspect of the creation? Explain.
3. Meditate on Psalm 36.9. Can we expect to discern the mind of the Lord in His *world* if we are not consistent in seeking Him and His mind in His *Word*? Explain.

Next steps – Preparation: Throughout this day, meditate on the idea of God's glory – what it is, what it's like to encounter the glory of God, how encountering the glory of God should affect us. Jot down any thoughts you have, or any experiences of God's glory. At the end of the day, pray these back to the Lord, with thanksgiving.

2 Observation

*He does great things past finding out,
Yes, wonders without number.
If He goes by me, I do not see Him;
If He moves past, I do not perceive Him...* Job 9.10, 11

Did you see that?

Most of us are just like Job. We know that 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. We know this because we believe His Word, and His Word tells us that God is revealing His glory in His world (cf. Ps. 19.1-4).

But we don't "see Him" or "perceive" His presence – not as much as we might, at any rate. This is in part because we have not trained our mind to see Him. We aren't *looking* for His glory or *paying attention* to His Presence in the world. Thus we fail to discern the revelation He pours out, day by day and night by night, to tell us of His glory and love.

But it's also because we don't know how to *read* the revelation of God in the book of creation. We must learn how to read the *Word* of God; it's logical to expect that we should also have to learn how to read the revelation of God in the *world* of God.

A sound mind is crucial to a well-kept heart and a strong soul. And a sound mind patterns itself after the mind of Christ, to think His thoughts after Him and be guided by all His Word. Thus, the more revelation of Jesus we can absorb, beginning with His Word, the more we may expect to increase in a sound mind. And since revelation of Jesus comes not only from His Word but also from His world, we must train our mind to discern His glory in the everyday things all around us (Prov. 25.2). This is the work of creational theology.

Begin here

Creational theology is the discipline that can help us learn to read the book of creation and culture, and creational theology *begins* as we train our senses to discern and discover the words God is speaking to us everywhere.

Reading God's world – practicing creational theology – involves six disciplines. Just as we must learn how to read the Word of God – read it all, read for our souls and lives, read for the culture and times, and so forth – so we can learn to read the creation. And reading creation begins with the discipline of *observation*.

Just as, when we're reading Scripture, we ask ourselves, "What's going on here? What am I seeing? What can I learn about Jesus here?", so it is with creational theology. When we realize that the glory of God is revealed in His *world*, we will begin to look at the world with a different purpose. We'll want to see God and His glory in created things, and to discover whatever can help us grow in the mind of Christ. Wonders without number await us, but we must learn to see them.

So we need to pay attention. We need to practice the discipline of *observation*.

To observe anything closely, you need to pause, look, and get your mind in gear. Focus. Describe. Perhaps even jot down some thoughts in a notebook or on a 3 x 5 card (I use both). We won't always remember or have the time to reflect deeply on what we observe, but if we write down even the slightest impressions, these can lead to fruitful seasons of discovering God's glory in the things He has made. If you have a cell phone, use the camera to capture some image you'll want to think about later in the day.

Set aside time for this activity, so that you enter it alert, focused, observant, and ready to think with the mind of Christ about the things He has made and the ways they proclaim His glory.

What to observe

But what should we observe?

First, sounds: “This is my Father’s world, and to my list’ning ears, all nature sings...” The gurgle of coffee percolating, the ominous rumble of an approaching thunderstorm, the hum and whirl of a well-tuned engine, the sweet whisper of a gentle breeze, the various songs of garden birds, the music you’ve chosen – all these and more can provoke us to ponder the wonder, mystery, majesty, and delight of God. What images, adjectives, or other descriptive terms come to mind as you listen carefully to the world around you?

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. 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. What patterns, geometric shapes, or forms of motion can you note?

Similarly, you can enlist your senses of taste, touch, and smell in this royal quest to discover the glory God has concealed in the things He has made. How does a kitchen filled with the aroma of freshly baked bread cause you to respond? And what about the flavor and texture of that bread as you hold and bite into it?

Together, our senses can become a research team for sharpening our skills of observation, helping us to pay more attention to the creation as we make notes, jot down sketches, record immediate impressions – all of which can become fodder for deeper meditation throughout the day or at more convenient times. Don’t worry about trying to discover something “theological” in your observations; simply get them down on paper or in a quick snapshot. There will be time later to layer on insights from Scripture and the thoughts of others.

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 contributes to the glory of the whole. So it is with the places God is everywhere speaking to us, every day of our lives. He is making Himself known, but we will only become adept at seeing Him if we train our minds to observe.

Begin observing God’s world. This is the first discipline for discerning the glory of God in His world. Train your mind to see and respond to the creation and culture around. And let these times of observation contribute to your seeing God as He moves past and goes by you.

For reflection

1. Look around you until you find one thing you might like to observe. Write it down. Now ask, “What was it about this item that arrested my attention?” Jot down whatever comes to mind. Then carry this with you for the day.
2. Why do you think believers, like Job, aren’t *more* observant of the presence of the Lord throughout the day?
3. How can believers help one another practice this discipline of *observing* the creation to discover the glory and mind of Christ?

Next steps – Preparation: As you go into your day, make sure you’re ready to observe the world with the mind of Christ. Set your mind in prayer, carry note cards or a note book, and ask the Lord to show you His glory throughout the day.

3 Association

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 1.14, 15

Glory in images

We are exploring some disciplines which engage the mind for seeing the glory of God in the things He has made. These disciplines can lend soundness to our thinking, so that we see the world as Jesus does and have our minds enriched by conscious and thoughtful exposure to the glory of God. We began this part of our study of a sound mind by considering that God does reveal Himself in created things. Knowing this should encourage us to pay a bit more attention to them, if perhaps we might glimpse a bit of the glory God has concealed there (Prov. 25.2). A second discipline, association, helps us in discovering what God wants us to learn of Him from creation and culture.

Throughout the Scriptures, God uses items from the created world, including culture, to refer to Himself, His attributes, or His plan. These are so many and so familiar that we can easily overlook the meaning they convey, or fail to think with the mind of Christ about why these items are so apt as referents to God. We can fail to see what these suggest about the glory of God and the mind of Christ – whether we encounter them in His *Word* or in His *world*.

Consider just a few of these: God's people are like *arrows*, which God, like a great archer, uses to subdue His enemies (Zech. 9.12). His voice is like the *thunder* and roar of mighty *oceans* (Ps. 29.3, 4), suggesting His power and immensity. He is wise like the *ant* and everywhere-present like the *lizard* (Prov. 24-28). He is the clothes-maker for *lilies* (Matt. 6.30) and the caretaker of *birds* (Matt. 6.26). A single *blade of grass* contains mysteries relating to His Kingdom (Mk. 4.26-28). We could multiply such examples by the score.

God wants us to know Him, and so He speaks to us in *familiar terms* and says, "I'm a little like that."

The more we observe the creation and culture around us, the more we'll collect objects and impressions that can lead to fruitful reflecting on the glory of God. This, in turn, will enable us to realize more of the mind of Christ. By learning to *associate* what we have observed in creation or culture with descriptions of God we read from His Word, we take up the second discipline of the glorious work of creational theology, the discipline of association.

Resting in thought

"This is my Father's world: I rest me in the thought of rocks and trees, of skies and seas..." From this point on, as you are reading your Bible, use your creational theology notebook to jot down instances in which God refers to Himself in everyday forms or terms – clouds, stones, birds, shepherds, and more. From time to time, choose one of these to reflect on at length as part of your time in God's Word. Ask yourself: How is God like this? Or, How do such things speak to us of God and His glory?

God uses familiar, everyday things and experiences to teach us something about Himself. As we reflect on the way He does this in His *Word*, we'll train our minds to do the same as we observe such things in His *world*. We will learn to *associate* created things with how *God* uses created things to reveal Himself in His Word. God is speaking to us everywhere through the things He has made, and the associations He makes in Scripture can guide us in making fruitful associations between our observations and God Himself.

Scripture must be the touchstone and standard for all our work in creational theology, so the more time you invest in meditating on these *Biblical* references to creation and what they say to us of God, the better equipped you'll be to tease out the hidden glory of God in your daily observations.

Some examples of association

A lengthy thunderstorm has just passed through your drought-parched community. Shall you merely ascribe this welcome relief to the chance vicissitudes of wind and humidity? Should you grouse and complain, as doubtless many will, that it's all too little, too late?

No; instead, you will acknowledge the voice of the almighty God as He thunders His steadfast love and faithfulness upon a largely ungrateful people, who take for granted His common grace and spurn the grace He offers them in Jesus Christ. But you will be reminded that His voice is like many waters – threatening, perhaps, but refreshing, timely, and just what we need at any moment – and you will lift your voice with thanksgiving and praise to the God Who speaks to us in the rain.

Or when the gas flame leaps to life on your oven top, can you see the glory of God in it, watching over you with the flaming eyes of Christ (Rev. 1.14), providing for your needs through the mystery and reliability of fire?

Will you allow the colors of the world to speak to you of the wonder, majesty, purity, and beauty of Christ? And as you do, you'll be more aware of His Presence and promises, and more attuned to His purposes and plans.

Scripture teaches us to *associate* things we see in creation with some aspect of God. By paying attention to such images and references in His *Word*, devoting ourselves to understanding them as deeply and completely as we can, we'll be more alert to the ways things in God's *world* point to Him as well; and we will train our minds to think the Lord's thoughts after Him, which, in turn, will lend strength to our entire soul.

Remember, the same God is speaking to us in His Word and His world. The mind of Christ lies back of *all* God's revelation, whatever the source. By observing the world more carefully and understanding the uses God makes of creation in His *Word*, we'll associate our observations with the glory and mind of Christ which are being revealed to us in His *world*, and this will help us immensely in our ongoing effort to be renewed in the mind of the Lord.

For reflection

1. Today, find something else to contemplate. This time, choose something which God uses in Scripture to reveal Himself – a stone perhaps, or clouds. Meditate on God's use of this item. What do you learn about Him?
2. Throughout the day, jot down as many observations of this item as you see – where you see it, what it looks like, how it's being used. Do you discern anything more about God in these observations?
3. At the end of the day, rest in thought about these observations. What has God shown you about Himself? Did paying attention to this item make you more aware of the presence of God with you throughout the day? Do you feel your mind being shaped to think about God in new ways? Give Him thanks and praise.

Next steps – Transformation: Begin giving thanks to God each time you make an observation and jot it down. You'll see how practicing creational theology can be a great help in learning to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5.17).

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

This burdensome task

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 of it has a place in the divine economy (Eccl. 3.1-8) and can reveal something about the glory and mind of God.

And God has put eternity in our hearts – the ability to peer through temporal reality into the eternal counsels of God – so that we can know Him and His world, using the mind of Christ, if only imperfectly (1 Cor. 2.16; Eccl. 3.11). We enrich our minds by seeking and discerning the glory of God all around us; and a sound mind helps to maintain a well-kept heart and a strong soul.

Creational theology is the work that lets us get at the glory of God which He has concealed in creation (Prov. 25.). This entails six disciplines, and we have thus far considered two of them: observation and association. If you have begun jotting down observations of your world and associating those observations with how God uses such items in Scripture, you’ll be doing the same kind of work Solomon did.

You’ll also probably discover that such work takes time, can be a little tedious, and doesn’t always yield the experience of God’s mind or glory that you’d hoped. Reading creation as a book of divine revelation is hard work – it’s a discipline, and we struggle with disciplines, simply because they are hard work.

But if we keep at it, we might learn, like Solomon, to understand the place of everything in our lives within the divine economy and see our experience in the world as a means for knowing God and being renewed in His mind.

But for this to occur, we’ll need to practice the third discipline of creational theology.

Be bold, but cautious

As we press ahead in our work of creational theology, we’ll want to *integrate* our observations of the world with the Scriptural associations they suggest. That is, we need to reach some conclusions about what we’ve seen or learned. Here we will make bold to offer some concise statement describing the glory of God we have discerned in the things He has made and we have observed.

The activity of integration involves summarizing what we have observed in creation and the Scriptures in our own words, so that we make a statement concerning what God has spoken to us about the things we have seen.

We will be bold but cautious here, bold because we’re making a statement about the glory of God or the mind of Christ which we have “read” in some aspect of the creation, and cautious because we understand all such statements are conditional only.

The conclusions we reach about God and His glory, as we integrate our observations and associations, are not to be considered normative. That is, they are not true or prescriptive on the same level that Scripture is true. Rather, they express our heightened awareness of God, enhance or clarify our understanding of Him, deepen our experience of Him, and bring us into His presence in more consistent and meaningful ways. While we expect everyone to read the same truth of God in His *Word*, we do not expect everyone to read the

same truth as we do from His *world*.

But that does *not* mean that the truth we discern about God's glory and mind in creation is not true or real. It is merely conditional, and not normative, but it may be enriching and exciting nonetheless.

The world a battleground

Our world may, in many ways, seem out of sorts and wrong – not what God would want it to be. But we may reflect from such observations that “This is my Father's world: the battle is not done...” The creation groans under the burden of human sin, and that condition of groaning can make it difficult for us to discern the glory of God in His world.

However, God is still bringing His redemptive work to bear on 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). By integrating your observations with Scriptural associations, you train yourself to respond to the “voice” of God as He speaks to you everywhere. That passing thunderstorm over the 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 can speak of the steadfast love and faithfulness of God, Who never sleeps, and Who causes all our work to prosper in His Name. Such observations, associated with similar items in Scripture and integrated into some conclusion, can greatly enrich our minds and enhance our sense of God's Presence with us.

Your growing sensitivity to the presence of God's glory in His creation may even lead you to some more conscious and deliberate, hands-on work of creation-keeping, as in gardening, or caring for your lawn, becoming part of an environmental effort, or discovering new ministry uses for your computer, art work, music, baking, corresponding, or so much more.. You will find it difficult to say to yourself, with increasing specificity, “God is speaking to me in creation,” and not expect to take creation – and culture as well – rather more seriously.

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 for you a record of how the glory of God has come to your attention in your daily walk with and work for the Lord. Then pray that statement back to the Lord with praise and thanksgiving for what He is showing you of Himself from the things He has made. He extends grace to encourage and edify you through the works of creation and culture, and He delights to receive thanks and praise, as we shall see (2 Cor. 4.15).

For reflection

1. Why is it important to say something about the observations we have made, and the ways we associate these with the revelation of God in Scripture?
2. How might such works of *integrating* revelation in creation with revelation in Scripture serve as conversation-starters with people in your Personal Mission Field? How did Jesus use them?
3. Make some statement about the observations and associations you have made thus far. What have you seen of God's glory, or learned about the mind of Christ from the book of creation?

Next steps – Conversation: Reflect on the work you have done to this point, observing and associating items from around you, and including your statement of integration about one of your observations. Talk with God about what you are learning, and give Him thanks and praise.

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*

Waiting on the Lord

We expect to discover the glory of God in His world, and to be renewed in our minds by applying ourselves to the work of creational theology. As we *observe* the world and its creatures and discover the *associations* God makes with such things in His Word, we will become eager and adept at *integrating* our observations into insights of theological and devotional truth. Solomon recorded many of these in the book of Proverbs, and there is no reason why we should not record our experiences with God's glory as well. Each such integration marks progress in our thinking, as our minds become more attune to the mind of Christ, speaking in His world.

Reading the book of God's world, in the light of His Word, contributes to a sound mind, a well-kept heart, and a strong soul. The next discipline in the work of creational theology helps to immerse us more fully in our experience of God's glory, and to extend that experience into other areas of our lives.

The word "inquire" in our text can also be translated "meditate." *Meditation* is the fourth discipline of creational theology. In meditation, we come before the Lord in silence, turning His beauty – as He has revealed it in His Word and creation – over and over in our minds, waiting on His Spirit to carry us to the next level of relationship and encounter with God's glory (2 Cor. 3.12-18).

Building on our observations, associations, and the integrating insights we have realized about God's revelation to us in His world, in meditation we *extend* our experience into *larger areas of life*. Waiting on the Lord in prayer and silence, we apply our experience of God's glory to more areas of our life in His world, so that the *good* we have learned about God and His mind can come to light *through* us in our Personal Mission Fields.

The key to meditation

The key to meditation is what the psalmist repeats at the end of Psalm 27 (vv. 13, 14):

*I would have lost heart, unless I had believed
That I would see the goodness of the LORD
In the land of the living.
Wait on the LORD;
Be of good courage,
And He shall strengthen your heart;
Wait, I say, on the LORD!*

Wait on the Lord: It's not something we do very well. How does this work?

In meditation we begin with our integrating insight, for example: "In that passing storm, the Lord reminded me that He is ever faithful to meet our needs, and we must never despair, but always trust and give thanks." Now we want to *extend* that insight to other areas where it may have application. So we begin thinking about other ways this *goodness of the Lord* – His faithfulness and provision – might be seen in our lives.

Yes, God is faithful in watering the earth and keeping our plants and yards alive. Where else is He faithful, that I too often take for granted? Yes, I sometimes get discouraged when I see my plants dying, my garden failing, and my yard parched and dying. What other circumstances cause me to become discouraged, when, really, I ought to be waiting on the Lord and giving Him thanks in all things (1 Thess. 5.18)? God is faithful to bless us through the rains. Does He want to bless others with His faithfulness through *me*? And so forth.

Wait for it

I find it helpful in times of meditation to journal my thoughts back to the Lord, beginning with that integrating insight or idea and extending it as far as it will go, as the Spirit of God leads me to consider His beauty and excellence, and my needs, failings, and calling. Journaling is an excellent way to practice waiting on the Lord, to discover where else He may lead you in seeking His goodness.

As I journal, other Scriptures will come to mind, shedding 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, He may even put me in mind of specific attitudes of which I need to repent, or new courses of action I might take to know His steadfast love and faithfulness or to serve Him more consistently. Over the years, my journal notes have provided useful reflections to return to, and even to augment, as the Lord continues to show me more and more of His beauty, goodness, and truth by speaking to me everywhere.

In meditation you revisit, stretch out, and extend your encounter with God's glory and the mind of Christ, allowing His Spirit to work within you so that you can be renewed in the mind of Christ, and the goodness of the Lord can come to light in more of your life, more of the time. Meditation makes your integrating insight something more than just a conclusion or an abstract notion. Meditation massages that insight into your soul – heart, mind, and conscience – revealing more of God's glory, transforming us ever so slightly into the image of Jesus Christ, and fitting us for good works in our daily lives.

Meditation is an important discipline for growing a sound mind. No wonder it was the “one thing” David felt he needed more of in his life. How about you?

For reflection

1. Do you practice meditation on Scripture? How do you do that? Why? What benefit do you gain for the renewing of your mind from meditating on the mind of Christ in His Word?
2. Does it make sense to meditate on creation? How can your practice of meditating on Scripture guide you in meditating on your observations, associations, and integrating statements from the revelation of God in His world?
3. Do you think this would be a fruitful exercise for renewing your mind in the mind of Christ? Why do you suppose most Christians don't do this?

Next steps – Preparation: Set aside a time for extended meditation on one of the integrating statements you have made, and the observation and associations that led to that. Jot down any ways that this time of meditation leads you to extend your experience into other areas of your life.

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;
The LORD is gracious and full of compassion.* Psalm 111.2-4

Exciting work

“Impression without expression leads to depression.” It’s an old saw of uncertain origins, but it contains a wealth of truth.

Practicing creational theology can be exciting. Something in the creation catches your attention. You focus on it, begin to take in the scope and wonder of it, recall some place where Scripture mentions this item in connection with God, and suddenly you become aware of His glory and some of His thinking in the object you are contemplating.

Further reflection on your observation and other associations in Scripture leads you to some conclusion about your experience, so that you proffer an insight from what you have learned about God or seen of His glory, or how you are being renewed in His mind. Later, you spend more time meditating on this, and you find what God has revealed of Himself in creation is leading you to more applications in many areas of your life.

Now you’re thinking with the mind of Christ! Now you’re experiencing that renewing of the mind that God calls us to pursue every day. And that can be exciting, indeed.

Deeper joy and awareness

If you’ve gotten this far in the practice of creational theology, you’ll have experienced some new and very exciting insights into the Lord, and seasons of communion with Him. Careful *observation*, prayerful *association* of Scripture with these observations, then *integrating* your experience into an insight or conclusion, expanded by *meditation* into other areas of your life – these activities can lead to deeper joy and greater awareness of the Lord.

We have been called to God’s Kingdom and glory so that we may know the righteousness, peace, and *joy* in the Spirit this way of living affords (Rom. 14.17, 18). And doing the work of creational theology can lead to deeper joy and wider awareness of the Lord, Who is with us always.

And, in my experience, 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. Celebration can help to make those divine impressions even more real and permanent than before.

Tips for celebrating

How do we celebrate what God is teaching us through His “two books” of revelation – creation and Scripture? Personally, corporately, and with some kind of memorial.

What do I mean?

First, personally: obviously, the place to begin in celebration is with *joyous worship* for what God is teaching. Find a hymn that expresses your experience and sing it over and over until you know it by heart. Each time

you sing that hymn, remember the experience of encountering God that you used that hymn to celebrate. It will be like you're living that insight all over again.

Pray daily with increasing thanksgiving and praise, celebrating God's love for you, Who cares enough to make Himself known with such intimacy and power. Talk often with the Lord throughout the day, as you again encounter Him in the things and places where you've met Him before. Share your insights with the people you encounter throughout the day, and let them celebrate with you.

Then, corporately: bring your experience to church with you on the Lord's Day, and let your encounter with the Lord fill your public worship. Or use it to offer testimony in your Sunday school class or Bible study group. Let others in on the joy and power you've experienced by celebrating what God has shown you "in the assembly of the upright and *in* the congregation" (Ps. 111.1).

Finally, consider making a memorial of some kind to commemorate and revisit this experience – like Jacob setting up the altar at Bethel, to which he frequently returned. Write a song or a poem. Take a picture of what you observed and post it on your desk or in an album. Paint a picture, make a soap carving, write a children's story, send an article to your church newsletter. Get together with some friends for a meal and share your experience, like the woman who celebrated finding her lost coin (Lk. 15.8-10).

Do something *public* that has more permanence to it, bear witness to others of your experience, so that they will be encouraged to seek the Lord more earnestly for themselves.

We are made in the image of God; thus, we are made to be creators, as He is our Creator. Celebrating our encounters with God in the world He has made and upholds can lead to all kinds of creative activities. To fail at this point is to let our experience slip away and to rob ourselves and perhaps others of some of the joy of our salvation.

Creational theology can provide plenty of inspiration and substance for celebrating the Lord, both in worship and in the creating of memorials of various kinds to honor Him. And celebrating the Lord in such ways aids in the renewing of our minds in the mind of our Lord Jesus Christ and thus to the strengthening of our souls.

For reflection

1. In what ways do you presently celebrate the Lord's goodness?
2. What experiences or activities do you associate with the idea of *celebrating*? Why is this an appropriate word to use in memorializing what we've experienced of God's mind or glory?
3. Celebrating can take the form of creative activity. Do any such activities appeal to you as a way of celebrating what you're learning about God? Explain.

Next step – Demonstration: Today, find a way to celebrate what God is teaching you about Himself from His world. Invite someone else to share in your celebration and explain why you're celebrating.

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:
“To you, O men, I call,
And my voice is to the sons of men.”* Proverbs 8.1-4

Get wisdom!

We expect to encounter the wisdom of God as one aspect of the glory He reveals in His world. Wisdom is the fruit of fearing God (Ps. 111.10), and it is entirely different from what the world thinks of as wisdom (cf. Jms. 3.13-18). We seek to know God’s wisdom from the study of His *Word*, and we may expect to know it from observing and meditating on His *world*. Indeed, wisdom is one of, if not *the* principal thing we should be seeking in our study of all God’s revelation, both in His Word and His world. As Solomon explains in Proverbs 4.5-7:

*Get wisdom! Get understanding!
Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth.
Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you;
Love her, and she will keep you.
Wisdom is the principal thing;
Therefore get wisdom.*

This is especially so because, as Paul explains, Jesus Christ is the treasury of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2.2, 3). To get wisdom, to gain knowledge of the glory of God in creation, is to get Jesus Christ Himself. And getting Jesus, becoming more like Him, is the primary work of God in our lives (2 Cor. 3.12-18).

So as we study the Scriptures and read the book of creation, seeking to improve our minds and souls with wisdom, we are above all wanting to know Jesus. For in knowing Him we will increase in a sound mind, the mind of Christ, which is an integral component of a strong soul.

Wisdom cries out

Jesus Christ, the Wisdom of God, cries out in Proverbs 8 – in the streets, around the corners, at every crossroads, in all of creation. Wisdom is the voice of the Word of God, even our Lord Jesus Christ. (Don’t be misled by the fact that Wisdom, speaking in Proverbs 8, is referred to by feminine pronouns; all abstract nouns in the Hebrew language are feminine, but this has nothing to do with gender.)

Jesus Christ, the Wisdom of God, is what we expect to experience, learn, and grow in as we seek the mind of Christ in His Word and His world.

And one thing we know about the Wisdom of God from Proverbs 8: He simply will not keep quiet! Wherever we encounter Wisdom, He calls out to us: “Here I am! Look at Me! Learn from Me! Be blessed in Me!” And wherever we *find* the Wisdom of God, our duty is to become His voice, crying Him and His benefits to everyone who will listen.

From this we learn that our celebration of what God has shown us of Himself in creation and culture is not complete until celebration turns to proclaiming Jesus as the Word and Wisdom of God.

Full circle

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 the people in our Personal Mission Field. “This is my Father’s world: the battle is not done; Jesus who died will be satisfied...” And Jesus is satisfied when He and His wisdom and glory and grace are made known to others (Hab. 2.14; 2 Cor. 4.15). *All* theological study leads to Jesus, and Jesus insists that we bear witness to Him (Acts 1.8).

The revelation of God that comes to us in creation and culture will speak to us of the glory, goodness, grace, truth, power, and wisdom of God as these are revealed above all in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our task of creational theology comes full circle when what God has proclaimed to us of Himself in His world, we proclaim to the people to whom He sends us each day.

Jonathan Edwards, the great Puritan preacher of the mid-18th 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 and think through all his observations. In due course, one or more of his experiences with the revelation of God in creation would find its way into one of Edwards’ sermons, where it would focus the minds of hearers on the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

All revelation from God – whether in creation or Scripture – finds its ultimate meaning in Christ; He is the Rosetta Stone of Scripture, the means by which creation exists (Jn. 1.1-4; Heb. 1.3), and the end toward which all creation moves (Rom. 11.36). Our work of creational theology is finished when we have connected what God has shown us from the world with the work of Christ – His work of redemption and salvation, restoring the reconciled world, ruling and upholding all things, and His imminent return. Thus the world and everything in it, which were called into being by the Word of God, realizes its own unique purpose, with the help of God’s people, to honor and glorify the One Who made and sustains it all day long (cf. Ps. 148).

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 or will not see for *themselves*, then to help them discover the One Who cries out to them, so that they might turn to Him and live. 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, by which we are renewed in the mind of Christ to serve His Kingdom and glory.

For reflection

1. What is wisdom? Why is Jesus the treasure of all wisdom and knowledge? Why should we pursue all our observations – whether in the Word or world of God – until they lead us to Jesus?
2. How might you go from some encounter with the wisdom of God in creation to beginning a conversation about Jesus? Use the observations you’ve been making in this series to try a transition or two.
3. How would you like to see yourself be more consistently used as a mouthpiece for the Wisdom of God?

Next steps – Proclamation: Are you ready today to proclaim Jesus from what you see in creation or culture? How will the Wisdom of God cry out through you today?

The Mind of Christ in His World: Part 1

For reflection

1. Why do we say that the creation is a “book” of divine revelation? Do you think most Christians regard the creation this way? Explain.
2. What is the purpose of creational theology? How do we practice this work? To what should creational theology lead us?
3. Why do you suppose most Christians don’t practice creational theology?
4. How can Christians help one another to be more consistent in practicing creational theology?
5. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned for being renewed in the mind of Christ about the work of creational theology?

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 to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship to help us extend our ministry and resources to others. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 360 Zephyr Road, Williston, VT 05495.

Thank you.