

# GOD AT WORK

## UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES 4



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A REVISION STUDY FROM  
THE FELLOWSHIP OF AILBE

*God at Work*

God at Work  
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The Fellowship of Ailbe

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## Welcome to *God at Work*

In the wheat field of God's world, unbelievers are busily at work in their various under-the-sun schemes and projects, trying to make sense out of a life that can feel to them like vanity and feeding on the wind.

Still, many of their works are impressive. We can get the impression, given the works of unbelieving scientists, politicians, thinkers, and tinkers of all sorts, that these are the really important works in history.

We would be wrong.

God is at work in the field of the world, in ways vastly more numerous and varied, and more complex and glorious, than all the works of unbelieving people combined. We need to study God's works, and even engage in them with Him, if we're going to understand our times and know what we should do in seeking the Kingdom and righteousness of God.

*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 Scope of God's Works

*The works of the LORD are great,  
Studied by all who have pleasure in them.* Psalm 111.2

### *God irrelevant?*

One of the more regrettable features of our increasingly secular, materialist, and narcissistic age is the way belief in God's working in the world has been diluted, if not altogether abandoned, even by those who profess faith in Jesus Christ.

The more secular scientists probe the mysteries of the cosmos, and the more social scientists apply naturalistic methods to understanding human behavior, the less room there is for God to have anything to do. The same is true in the realm of politics. As government has increasingly become the agency of choice for achieving the secular and materialist dream, disciplines such as prayer, and institutions like the Church have receded into the background. The ways and powers of men hold more promise than those of God for our under-the-sun generation.

This vaunting of naturalistic science and humanistic politics has led many to dismiss the belief that God governs the cosmos. And one of the effects of this is to encourage the belief that God is irrelevant to our moral lives as well, and, thus, irrelevant altogether.

Add to this the growing visibility and presence of tares throughout the field of the world, and many people will conclude that God has abandoned the earth to its folly.

But we should understand from the parable of the wheat and the tares that the field of the world is *God's* field, and that the Son of Man is at work throughout His field, sowing the good seed of the Kingdom, and bringing forth fruit for His glory. In understanding our secular times, and discerning what we must do, we will be much encouraged by considering all the many ways God *is* at work in the world, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding.

### *Fully engaged*

The secular and naturalistic view of the cosmos and human behavior does not comport well with what the Bible teaches, as we might expect. The Bible teaches that all creation exists and is upheld by the power and for the pleasure of God Almighty, and that He rules over all men and judges them according to His holy and righteous and good Law (Heb. 1.3; Col. 1.16, 17; Ps. 9.7, 8; Rom. 1.18-32; Jms. 2.12, 13). Far from being detached from the cosmos and men, or at best, only remotely involved in their daily processes and activities, God is intimately, continuously, comprehensively, and personally engaged with the creation in all its parts.

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it (Ps. 24.1). The world is the Lord's field, which He is working and preparing toward the coming day of harvest. The heavens and even the heaven of heavens belong to Him (Ps. 89.11; Ps. 115.16). He is in through, over, and beyond all creation, and all creation exists in Him and serves His purposes according to His will (Acts 17.28; Ps. 119.89-91).

The Bible consistently speaks of the works of the Lord as matters for His people to understand and remember (cf. Ps. 78.1-8). The works of the Lord are comprehensive of all reality and all its functions, and they speak to us of the character and purpose of God. Whatever the findings of science, and no matter how deeply scientists probe the very fabric of the creation, or politicians extend their tentacles into more and more of our lives, Christians must not allow the promoters of the secular agenda to have the last word on how and why the cosmos is the way it is or should be, or what the role of God is or should be in that vast theatre. To

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us falls the duty of delighting in and declaring the works of God, and of working with the Son of Man in His labors, so that God may receive the praise and honor which are His due.

### *The works of the Lord*

The works of the Lord are, in essence, three – although under those headings they break down into many, many more detailed and intimate operations. The first of God’s works – His exertions beyond Himself into a realm of space and time of His own constructing – is the work of *creation*. Out of nothing and into nothing, the God Who has existed from forever called into being the cosmos and all its creatures. All creation is from the mind and hand of God. It exists by His pleasure and power, according to His plan, and for His purposes.

Closely and inextricably associated with creation is the work of divine *providence*, whereby, as I have suggested, the Lord upholds the creation He has made and everything in it by His Word of power. God rules the world in exhaustive detail, having established it with such order, precision, and elegance that His image-bearers can gain a considerable, though not exhaustive, understanding of how the cosmos works (Eccl. 3.11).

Finally, and central to God’s work in this secular age, is the Lord’s work of *redemption*. By this great work, centered on Jesus Christ, God is recovering from every sector of His field a harvest for Himself and His glory. Day by day the Son of Man rides out to sow the good seed of the Kingdom and call out from humankind a people to be His co-workers in accomplishing His redemptive agenda.

These are the works of the Lord, which believers are called to delight in and declare. We must not allow the increasing secularism and narcissism of our times to obscure our vision of the works of God. We will be emboldened to sow good Kingdom seed as we understand that, in these under-the-sun days, the good works of God continue, unhindered, unobstructed, and throughout the field of the world. And we are privileged to be co-workers with Him for His glory.

### *For reflection*

1. It’s easy to lose sight of God’s work in the world in these increasingly secular days. Why is this so?
2. Meditate on Psalm 78.1-8. What was the Psalmist’s attitude toward the works of God?
3. We are called to be co-workers with God by our good works. Can we be as effective as possible in this calling apart from a good understanding of the works of the Lord? Explain.

*Next steps – Preparation: How are the works of God evident to you each day? Today, make a point of noting the various works of God – creation, providence, redemption – as you encounter them. Talk with Him about His works.*

## 2 The Message of God's Works

*His work is honorable and glorious,  
And His righteousness endures forever...  
The works of His hands are verity and justice;  
All His precepts are sure. Psalm 111.3, 7*

### *God speaks*

One of the reasons it's so important for us to understand the works of the Lord is because they speak to us about Him. In trying to understand the times and know what we should do, hearing whatever God has to say, from as many sources as we can, is of the utmost importance.

God reveals Himself through three important means of revelation. The *primary* light of divine revelation is the Bible, the Word of God. We need to dwell always in this light to make sense of the rest of God's revelation (Ps. 36.9). The *secondary* light is His work in creation. God speaks through the creation, revealing things about Himself in a manner so plain and self-evident that only those who have hardened their hearts against the knowledge of God can fail to know Him thereby (Rom. 1.18-21). The *focusing* light of each of these is Jesus Christ, who fulfills the Scriptures (Jn. 5.39) and in whom the whole of creation consists (Col. 1.15-17). Only by looking at the primary and secondary lights of revelation through the light of Jesus Christ can we make sense of them as God intends. This is true for the Word of God, and it is also true for His works.

God is revealing Himself in the works He pursues throughout the field of the world. The heavens and everything in them declare the glory of God (Ps. 19.1-4). Even the most helpless newborn has a message about God so powerful that it can stop the mouths of unbelievers and detractors (Ps. 8.1, 2).

### *It's about God*

The message of God's works is a message about Him – His being and character, purpose and will, wisdom and glory.

The Psalms especially bristle with words expressing the message of God's works concerning Him: "How excellent is Your name in all the earth..." (Ps. 8.1) "The heavens declare the glory of God..." (Ps. 19.1) "The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders; the LORD is over many waters. The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty" (Ps. 29.3, 4). "Come, behold the works of the LORD, Who has made desolations in the earth" (Ps. 46.8). "All Your works shall praise You, O LORD, and Your saints shall bless You. They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom, and talk of Your power, to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom" (Ps. 145.10-12).

Clearly, the message of God's works, as He pursues them in the field of the world, is a message about Him.

But what does God want us to learn about Him, as we study His works? What can His works tell us about God?

### *Splendor and majesty*

Two words in particular summarize the divine character and purpose revealed in His works – splendor and majesty. Each of these gathers to it a cluster of other modifiers which, together, infuse our imagination with bright images of God's nature and purpose.

*Splendor* gets at the idea of extravagance in beauty, goodness, purity, excellence, power, and bounty. God's works – all the wide and variegated creation and all His redemptive, sanctifying, and reconciling grace – show

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us a God of abundant energy and lavish goodness, Who calls us to similar extravagance in knowing and serving Him. Here is a God worthy of all thanks and praise, a God to be loved.

*Majesty* addresses the greatness of God – His incomprehensibility, immensity, infinite power, authority, and glory. In His works of creation, providence, and redemption, we come to know a God of unbounded power, infinite wisdom, unfathomable mystery, and exalted honor and glory. Here is a God to be feared.

The God Who thus reveals Himself provides a stark contrast to the finite, narcissistic minds and projects of our secular age, be they ever so many, ambitious, or successful.

Implied in these two terms is one other important idea, an attribute of God we see revealed in the reliable and regular patterns and laws of the universe: our God is *faithful*. None of us went to bed last night wondering where the sun went or if we'd see it again the next day. None of us fears that the molecules of our chairs will suddenly decide to fly off into space, leaving us sprawling on the floor. We know that the universe is knowable, regular, reliable, because our splendid and majestic God has made and keeps it this way.

He is faithful; God can be trusted. Regardless of what we see going on around us in the world – the increase of tares and the dismissing of God – our faithful, splendid, and majestic God is still at work according to His plan, and for the purpose of bringing forth fruit unto the harvest. Our secular generation may be pursuing its life under the sun, but the creation and everything in it exists under the heavens, for God is at work in it faithfully, with splendor and majesty.

Understanding this, we know that we must take up our work alongside this splendid, majestic, and faithful Sower, believing that our good works can glorify Him as we sow Kingdom seed in our part of the field of the world.

#### *For reflection*

1. Why does it make sense that God's works would contain a message about Him?
2. How can you see the *splendor* of God in His works?
3. How can you see the *majesty* of God in His works?

*Next steps – Preparation: Make a point today to observe something about the splendor, majesty, and faithfulness of God from His works. At the end of the day, use your observations to compose a prayer of thanks to God.*

### 3 The Works and Word of God

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;  
A good understanding have all those who do His commandments.  
His praise endures forever.* Psalm 111.10

#### *Wisdom to know God*

Since God is so active in revealing His splendor, majesty, and faithfulness, as He works throughout the field of the world, we may find it difficult to understand why more people aren't taking notice. It would seem to be the part of wisdom to acknowledge the works of God, listening to the message He speaks, so that we might know, love, and serve Him better in all the work we've been given to do.

And this is precisely the problem: Many people lack the wisdom necessary to engage with God in His works, not only those who are trapped in an under-the-sun frame of reference, but even those who claim to be living under the heavens by believing in Jesus Christ.

The wisdom needed to discern the knowledge of God in His works comes only from God, and only to those who fear Him, who love and obey Him according to His Word. Solomon sought this wisdom out of love for God and desire to serve Him well, and wisdom was granted to him, at least for the greater part of his reign.

The wisdom of God comes to us today through the knowledge of Jesus Christ, in Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2.3). They who know Christ receive wisdom from God, so that they might discern His works and bring their works into line with His, making the best use of their time in wisdom, rather than in folly (Eph. 5.15-17).

#### *Denying God*

That leaves out a good many people. As we've seen from Romans 1.18-32, all people know God is speaking to them in the works He has made. They know God, because He has revealed Himself clearly to them. They may deny that, and, in our under-the-sun generation, denying belief in God is widespread, even fashionable.

But God's Word is more reliable than any human being's confident assertion. God is plainly and unmistakably making known His eternal power and divine nature, and a measure of that revelation lodges indelibly in the soul of every person, since every human being is made in the image of God.

But, as Paul explains, those who do not fear the Lord bury that revelation in lives of ingratitude, idolatry, and unrighteous works, just as Solomon did for many years. God deposits a seed of revelation in their souls, by which He urges people on in seeking Him, as Paul explained to the philosophers in Athens (Acts 17.26, 27). Yet the vast bulk of the world's people deny that what they observe around them has anything to do with God. Turning from Him, they seek idols of various kinds, to which they devote their affections, interest, time, and strength – self and happiness, primarily. Meanwhile, they suppress the knowledge of God under the rubble of rebellion and sin.

For people to discern the splendor, majesty, and faithfulness of God in all His works, they must first come to Him and receive the wisdom only He can give. As Paul explained to the Athenians, God is commanding all people to repent and believe the Gospel. Jesus Christ embodies the wisdom of God (Col. 2.2, 3), which means that only those who know, love, and serve Jesus can obtain His wisdom – wisdom without which, they will not hear the voice of God in His works.

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Hence the importance of sowing the good seed of Christ and His Kingdom in the sectors of the field assigned to each of us. As we sow Christ, and people come to know Him, they can discern the work of God in the field of the world, and join with Him in that work in every area of their lives.

### *Are we listening?*

But why do so many who *do* know Jesus seem not to benefit from the revelation of God in His works? Why are they so easily troubled and discouraged by the works of unbelief? Why do not the works God is doing in the field of the world inspire, direct, embolden, and move more of His people to take their place in His sowing?

Perhaps they do not understand the times in line with the teaching of Scripture? As we have seen, the Scriptures insist that God is everywhere active and working in the world. He calls us to understand His works, to join Him in them, and to give Him praise for what He reveals about Himself in His works. Unless we understand our times through the lens of God's Word, we will allow the works of unrighteousness and unbelief to cow and discourage us from actively joining the Lord in sowing good seed throughout His field.

The Scriptures guide us to learn from God's works of creation, providence, and redemption, as we observe these in the creation, culture, and lives of people around us. The more we read and study the works of God, the more we will realize that, as active as the sowers of tares appear to be, God is far more active throughout the field of the world, with greater power and more lasting effects. And thus the better equipped we will be to understand that the splendor, majesty, order, goodness, and wisdom we observe in the world are but manifestations of God at work.

And seeing God at work in the world, preparing a harvest for His glory, we will more readily, consistently, and effectively work with Him in our sector of His field.

### *For reflection*

1. Why should we listen to the Bible concerning the works of God in the world? How do the Scriptures guide us in discerning God's works?
2. What is wisdom, why is it so necessary for discerning God's works, and how can believers increase in wisdom?
3. The works of God are more, more constant, and more varied than all the works of all under-the-sun people and projects. We would see the world more as a wheat field than a weed field if we could keep this fact in mind. Why?

*Next steps – Preparation: Pray for wisdom, that you might see God more at work in your Personal Mission Field, creating, sustaining, enhancing, and redeeming the time He entrusts to you. Share your observations with a fellow believer.*

## 4 Redeeming and Reconciling

*He has sent redemption to His people;  
He has commanded His covenant forever:  
Holy and awesome is His name.* Psalm 111.9

### *God's eternal covenant*

God is continuously at work throughout the field of the world, preparing a great ingathering for Himself in the coming day of harvest. We can become easily discouraged in our callings as ambassadors of the Kingdom of God and witnesses to Jesus Christ, if we focus only on the works of unbelief and sin which are everywhere evident in our secular age. As many and as visible as these are, they do not begin to compare, either in scope or significance, to the work God is doing in His field, and which He calls us to join Him in as sowers of the good seed of His Kingdom.

God Who created and sustains the world, is working to redeem and reconcile, not just the souls of lost sinners, but the entire creation and all of culture.

We must ever remind ourselves, lest we fail in our calling, that the world is not a weed field, waiting to be burned, but a wheat field, to be sown, cultivated, and harvested for the Lord. "Lift up your eyes," Jesus tells us (Jn. 4.35), not to look upon the tares, but to see, if only in prospect, the vast harvest He is preparing.

The works of God – creation, providence, and redemption – are all bound up in God's covenant. At the center of God's covenant is His determination to call out a people for Himself, to whom He makes Himself known, and whom He enlists in His magisterial project of sowing His field to redeem and reconcile the world unto Himself. We who are no longer strangers to God's covenant, but members of His household, must join Him in the work He has prepared for us (Eph. 2.11-13, 19-22). And this work extends to all of creation and culture, as well as to the souls of men.

### *The goodness of the Lord*

In the beginning, the Scriptures tell us, God created the world and all things in it *good*. Mankind's fall into sin affected not only human beings, but all of creation, which now groans and travails under the burden of humanity's sin (Rom. 8.20-22). Thus, what God intended for good – a creation that would flourish, abound, and exult, as it were, in declaring His glory (cf. Ps. 148) – now suffers corruption, decay, waste, and destruction because of the sinful practices of the human race.

Yet those who have entered into God's covenant through Jesus Christ, and who now have the wisdom of God, are called as part of God's work of redemption, to restore the creation, as fully as possible, to its good estate. Our prayer must ever be that of David in Psalm 27.13: "*I would have lost heart*, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living." This is a call to exercise stewardship over all created things in the light of God's having created and providentially ruling the world for His purposes and glory.

The Apostle Paul taught that the creation waits with eager longing for the sons and daughters of God to free it from the grip of sin, and restore creation to its proper place in God's covenant (Rom. 8.19). How do they do that?

### *Redeeming creation*

They do this, first of all by *interpreting* the voice of God as He speaks through creation to one another and the world. God is determined that His glory, which He is revealing in all His works, should be made known as

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the water covers the seas (Hab. 2.14). “He speaks to me everywhere,” as the hymn has it, and part of our work in the field of the world is to hear that voice and declare it. This is the privilege and calling of God’s redeemed people, as they, delighting in the works of God, study His works to know Him better (Ps. 111.2).

Second, by *exercising good stewardship* over God’s work of creation, the redeemed of the Lord liberate it from the destructive powers of sin, so that it can be fruitful for use in good works by the redeemed of the Lord, works that bring glory to Him (Ps. 119.89-91; Matt. 5.16). This aspect of our calling applies not only to the natural world, but the culture, mores, and institutions of our day. Whatever of God’s creation He entrusts to us, whether of the natural world or of culture, we must cultivate and use for good, as God originally intended.

Third, they who know the Lord and His works must *rightly represent it* in conversation, and in works of art, literature, and music – as, for instance, in the Book of Psalms. It matters, when we are working in the Lord’s field, how we talk about and otherwise represent the world we share in common with our unbelieving neighbors. Is it *nature* or is it *creation*? Are all these many and varied creatures just so many birds, bugs, and weeds, or do they have names and places within the divine economy? What others may regard as just so much stuff, to be used as we see fit, we must represent as precious gifts from God, fraught with glory and pointing to our Creator and Lord.

In His covenant, God promises to bless His people with a close and intimate relationship of love. From there He sends us out each day into the field of the world, where, amid the increasing tares of our secular age, our task is to redeem and reconcile all of creation, so that the goodness and glory God has embedded there may be discovered and declared (Prov. 25.2).

### *For reflection*

1. How can you see that God has left a considerable amount of *good* in the field of the world? Give some examples.
2. Does it matter whether Christians use creation and culture as vessels of God’s glory, and potential means of making Him known? Explain.
3. What role does redeeming and reconciling creation and culture have in sowing the good seed of the Kingdom?

*Next steps – Preparation: Make a list of the “created things” that fall within your stewardship. Be general, not specific (“clothes” rather than all the different kinds of clothes). Are you using these things for working the Lord’s field? Explain.*

## 5 Remember God's Works

*He has made His wonderful works to be remembered;  
The LORD is gracious and full of compassion.  
He has given food to those who fear Him;  
He will ever be mindful of His covenant.  
He has declared to His people the power of His works,  
In giving them the heritage of the nations. Psalm 111.4-6*

### *Remember*

God has made His wonderful work to be *remembered*. The sense of that word is more than merely to recall some mental notion of God as Creator, Sovereign, and Redeemer. The Hebrew word *remember* is more active and attentive, more personally engaged, as in Exodus 2.24: “So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.” God’s covenant with Israel had not slipped His mind during those 430 years of captivity in Egypt. He was caring for them, watching over them, and attending to their daily needs – *remembering* His covenant, just as He wants us to *remember* His works.

We remember the works of God as we go out into the field of the world with Him, joining Him in His work in all the work *we’ve* been given to do. We do not allow the many works of our under-the-sun generation to obscure the larger, more splendid, majestic, and faithful works of God. Instead, meditating on those works daily, delighting in and studying them, we respond to the work of God according to our own place and calling in His field. Thus we remember His works and show ourselves to be, like Him, “ever mindful of His covenant.”

But how should we who are daily sent into the field of the world respond to the splendid, majestic, and faithful works of the Lord?

### *Remember creation and providence*

When one becomes a believer in Jesus Christ, whole new vistas of understanding open up, as the Spirit of God begins to teach us to see and live according to God’s Word, and to respond, as our text indicates, appropriately to all the works of God.

They who have entered into God’s work of redemption are called to remember the works of the Lord – all His works, not just that which Jesus has accomplished for our salvation. Those who have come to know Jesus Christ, and who are beginning to realize the vast scope of the works of God, will want to become more mindful of the *creation*, in all its variegated splendor and majesty. They will want to study and ponder the faithful works of God in *providence* as, by His steadfast love, He continues to uphold the cosmos and everything in it by His Word of power.

The redeemed must not be like the lost, who fail to observe God’s providence, or to give thanks for and redeem His creation. Rather, we must become more mindful of all His works, and teach the generations to come to remember the works of the Lord as well (Ps. 78.1-8). Our first responsibility in remembering the works of the Lord is to begin to become better acquainted with them.

Today, most children of believers receive all their instruction about the world – geography, science, meteorology, physics, civics, and the like – at the hands of instructors who do not see these sciences as means of exploring the works of God. In the schools of our secular age, the creation is merely “nature” and the providence of God reduces to “laws” of physics. Civics reduces to “politics” and has nothing to do with God’s Law. As the schools instruct our children in the ways of the world, God has no part in the creation.

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Is it any wonder, therefore, that so many children of the Church give up their faith when they head off to college? Having spent twelve years in classrooms where the relevance of God is ignored or, worse, denied, they are only following the logical implications of the education we have allowed them to receive.

In the Church we must find ways of redressing this gross injustice, and of helping our children remember all the works of the Lord in creation and providence.

### *Thanksgiving and mission*

Further, we respond to God's works with *thanksgiving* – throughout the day, at all times, for everything He provides, and not just the food we eat (Phil. 4.6, 7; 1 Thess. 5.18). The works of God in creation, providence, and redemption offer abundant cues and summons to lift our hearts to Him with thanks and praise. We should express our gratitude in prayer, of course, but we should also talk about our gratitude to God with the people around us, making mention of His many works by expressing our thanks for them all.

Finally, the grace, power, and truth of God observable in all His works must impel the people of God to *mission* (Ps. 105.1-5). God has prepared a heritage and harvest among the peoples in the field of the world, and in the Personal Mission Field of each of us. We must lift up our eyes to see this great harvest, and go forth with Him daily to sow the good seed of the Kingdom.

All creation and culture are meant to serve God (Ps. 119.89-91). They are at the disposal of God's covenant people so that we, reconciling all things to God, might engage God's works in sowing the world for Jesus Christ. We remember and give thanks for the works of God in creation, providence, and redemption, as we acquaint ourselves with them, give more consistent thanks, and engage His work to make disciples of all nations.

### *For reflection*

1. Why do you suppose Christians do so little to counteract the secular teaching their children receive in the schools of the land?
2. Which aspects of creation and culture has God entrusted to you? What does it mean for you to remember and redeem these?
3. Do you believe God is preparing a harvest for Himself in your Personal Mission Field? Explain.

*Next steps – Preparation:* Become acquainted with God's works. Respond often with thanksgiving. Let God's work impel you to mission. What is your plan, following these headings, for responding to the works of God? Share it with some Christian friends.

## 6 Delighting in God's Works

*The works of the LORD are great,  
Studied by all who have pleasure in them.* Psalm 111.2

### *The abounding works of God*

The works of the Lord present a vast array of extremely interesting and wondrous actions, far outstripping in number and variety, and vastly more significant than all the most amazing works accomplished by our under-the-sun generation of scientists, politicians, thinkers, and tinkerers. While the works we see of our secular and unbelieving age are many and impressive, the works of God operate at an *unseen* yet real and all-pervading level, reaching to and sustaining every created thing, giving life and good things to all creatures. These are the works by which the Son of Man prepares, sows, cultivate, and brings forth a harvest for Himself in the field of the world.

And these are the works He calls us to pursue with Him in our secular and unbelieving age.

Creation, providence, and redemption – the works of the Lord – embrace the entire cosmos, every creature, all of history, and every facet of human life and culture. God is at work everywhere in the field of the world, bringing His Kingdom to earth as it is in heaven. No aspect of human life or the cosmos is untouched by the work of God. He is sovereign over everything that exists, all of which is the result of His creating work. And in the midst of all that is, God is working all things together to accomplish the redemption of His people and the world.

### *A most welcome affection*

As we begin to appreciate the vast scope of the splendor, majesty, and faithfulness of God in His works, responding in thanksgiving and the making God's works known to others, we will find a most welcome affection growing in our souls – delight. The works of God are a source of pleasure to those who engage them with Him.

God's works fill our minds, re-sorting all the intellectual categories of our thinking and stretching out the horizons of our worldview. His works captivate and enthrall our hearts, causing glad affections to brighten and grow strong. We discover a pleasure in knowing and sharing in the work of God that is unlike any other pleasure or delight – profound, spiritual, wholesome, unaffected by events in time and space, and brimming with joy.

The more we study the works of God, the more we will delight in them; and the works of God will assume a new priority in our souls, as we make more time to remember, reflect on, and respond to the works of God with thanksgiving and service. The pleasure we find in thus remembering the works of God will cause our lives to change – how we regard and care for the world, what we seek in our relationships with others, how we spend our time, how we fulfill our roles and responsibilities

Nobody wants to live a dour and depressing existence. We must all have things in our lives that give us delight, and God has made us in His image, so that we should find our principal and ultimate delight in Him (Ps. 16.11), as He makes known Himself and His will to us through His Word and His works.

### *Wonder, beauty, power, love*

How do we experience this pleasure? What is it like, to delight in the works of God? This is difficult to encapsulate in words, as delight is such a personal and inward experience. Nevertheless, let me suggest some forms of pleasure which remembering the works of God have engendered in people of every age and culture.

## *God at Work*

First, *wonder* – that child-like sense of one’s imagination brightening, expanding, discovering new worlds and possibilities, and venturing into new places, as old assumptions and ways of thinking are refreshed, renewed, and revived. The experience of vastness, newness, and of being welcomed into the infinite – wonder!

Along with wonder is *beauty* – the experience of theme, proportion, balance, perspective, color, tone, and mood, combining to bring that sense of “Wow!” We know beauty because we want to linger before it, and visit it again and again, for it taps into streams of joy running deep within our soul.

I should also mention the experience of *power*, the thrill of knowing, in the face of unlimited power, the simultaneous sensations of fear and safety. There is also the sense of security and of participating in power that we may know in the Lord’s wisdom, provision, attention, compassion, and favor, a feeling of wellbeing that grows strong in one who spends much time remembering the works of the Lord.

And withal, the experience of God’s steadfast *love*. Of knowing, as you wonder at the night sky, admire the beauty of a Bach cantata, stand before the power of a rushing wind, that your ability to know such works is only because God, every moment of your life, having created you in His image, upholds you by His Word of power, and has redeemed you to full and abundant life in knowing Him and delighting in His works.

God’s promise is that, by attending to, remembering, studying, and engaging with His works of creation, providence, and redemption, we will know true and wholesome pleasure, and find incomparable delight growing in our souls. And as that occurs we will also discover something else: What we delight in, we tend to seek. Increasingly, we will linger over the works of God, celebrating before Him with glad hearts, eagerly joining with the Son of Man as He goes forth in all His works to sow the field of the world for harvest.

### *For reflection*

1. Why does God want us to find pleasure in His works? How have you experienced this pleasure in the works of God?
2. Do you think delighting in the works of God can strengthen our relationship with Him? Explain.
3. How can you find more time to remember the works of God, and to discover the pleasure He has for you in them?

*Next steps – Transformation: Choose something to focus on for a few days – perhaps a particular song bird, or a tree or other plant in your yard. Do a little reading about your chosen object. Reflect on your reading and observations. What do you see to provoke you to wonder? What is there of beauty or power in your object? How are you led to think about God as a result of this exercise? Share your findings with some Christian friends.*

## 7 Pursuing the Works of God

*The works of the LORD are great,  
Studied by all who have pleasure in them.* Psalm 111.2

### *Delight and pursue*

What we delight in, what gives us pleasure and joy, we tend to seek. The more efficient our seeking, the more pleasure and delight we will know, and the more joy we will experience.

Our psalm anticipates that those who remember the works of the Lord and respond to them by giving thanks and making His works known will take pleasure and find delight in God's works of creation, providence, and redemption.

As delight in God's works increases in us, we will set aside more time, and discover more effective means for seeking Him in His works, to know the experience of wonder, beauty, power, and love He brings to us. Indeed, you may even now be asking, in the hope of knowing such delight, "How, then, can I get to know the works of God better?"

Our text says that the works of the Lord are "studied" by all those who delight in them. While that's a fair translation of the Hebrew word, it doesn't quite capture its full meaning. The word is literally, *pursued*. The works of the Lord are *pursued* by those who delight in them, not just to learn about them or merely to know what they are, but to experience, possess, and, if it were possible, even to inhabit them. Those who find pleasure in the works of God want to *do* those works with Him, sowing the field of the world in a wide variety of works, to bring forth fruit of glory to the Lord.

That's the sense of the word here. If we would know more delight by remembering the works of the Lord, responding with thanksgiving, and speaking to others about them, then we must prepare, make a plan, and follow the path of *pursuing* God's works with greater diligence and consistency (Ps. 90.12, 16, 17).

### *Begin with the Word*

But how does one do that? Let me suggest two aspects to an approach of pursuing the works of the Lord that can give us a greater understanding and appreciation of God's splendor, majesty, and faithfulness, and that, as we respond by giving thanks and talking with others, will cause our delight in God and His works to grow.

First, begin with the Word of God. Let the Scriptures teach you *how* to understand the works of the Lord. We have seen that one psalm, Psalm 111, contains a wealth of instruction about God's work, which we have only barely considered. How much more must there be throughout the Scriptures to guide us in pursuing the works of the Lord and the delight that awaits us as we remember them?

Start a notebook or a journal. Create pages for each of the works of the Lord – creation, providence, redemption – and jot down passages of Scripture, and your response to these, that come to you through your daily reading and study of God's Word. Return to these passages again and again, mediating on the works of God as Scripture presents them. This will prepare you for remembering and participating in those works throughout the day.

### *Get out in the world*

One of the lessons of Scripture concerning the works of God is that He speaks to us about Himself and His will in them, as we have seen. As we grow in our understanding of God's works from His Word, we'll want to pursue those works at first hand, to remember and engage them, discover the pleasure God has for us in

them, and allow His works to further teach and equip us for serving Him in our part of His field.

Thus, second, we should all engage in some pursuit of God's works through study – reading, reflecting, experiencing God's works at first hand, and sharing with others. Find a study partner, someone who is equally excited about pursuing God's works, and make a plan for reading, sharing, and encouraging one another in different aspects of the works of God.

Select one of the three works of God for particular study. You may want to read a book like Augustine's *City of God* in order to explore the relationship between providence and human history and culture. Perhaps your interest is in understanding better God's work of redemption. You might study the history of Christian hymnody, to see how God's people have understood and celebrated the work of Christ in previous generations. Encourage one another as you study to make His finished work of redemption more personally your own. You may choose to go on a field trip together to consider some aspect of God's work of creation – to a museum, perhaps, or out in the woods or along a beach. Be sure to observe carefully and talk much about what you see of God in His works.

Whatever you choose to do, whether alone or with a study partner, leave time for prayers of thanksgiving, and devise some means whereby you might share with others the delight you experience in pursuing the works of God. Solomon tells us that God has “concealed” His glory in the works of creation, providence, and redemption. Our task and privilege is to study and pursue God's works, to uncover that glory and make it known to the world (Prov. 25.2; Hab. 2.14; 1 Cor. 10.31).

As we do, the fascination and allure of the works of this secular and unbelieving age will grow strangely dim and unappealing, or will take on new meaning, against the backdrop of the larger and all-pervading, splendid, majestic, faithful, wondrous, beautiful, powerful, wise, and loving works of God.

*For reflection*

1. What Scriptures come to mind as a good place to start in learning more about the works of God? Jot them down.
2. What subject areas of the works of God interest you? How can you make time in your weekly schedule to begin pursuing the works of God?
3. Why is it so important that Christians remember and pursue the works of God?

*Next steps – Preparation: How will you begin “pursuing” the works of God more consistently? Make a plan, then ask one or two of your Christian friends to join in it with you.*

*God at Work*

*For reflection or discussion*

1. What are the works of God, and why is it important that we understand these works?
2. What's involved in remembering and pursuing the works of God?
3. The works of God are largely *unseen* or *concealed*. But does that mean they are not real? Does it make them less significant or important than the highly visible works of our under-the-sun generation? Explain.
4. What will be your approach to pursuing the works of God?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this study about the works of God? 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.