

## 4. Biblical Worldview: Creating and Cultivating

We turn our attention now to the fundamentals of a biblically shaped worldview. We saw in the previous module that the Bible can be understood to be a big picture redemptive love story that culminates in and pivots on the cross and the “good news” of Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, redemption, ascension and enthronement in heaven as Lord of His people and of creation. It is the full biblical narrative that gives the gospel a context. Although this big picture story centres on the gospel, it can be broken down into a 3 part framework that helps us to define and understand a biblical worldview. We begin by acknowledging that God in his sovereignty and omnipotence created the world and it was “good”. At the pinnacle of this creation was humanity. God gave man and woman a mandate to cultivate the creation. However, disobedience and sin resulted in a distortion in the direction of creation and the special relationship God had with humanity. With great comfort we note that the biblical narrative at every point indicates that God the creator had a plan to redeem this situation and claim for himself a people united to Christ through the work of the cross who will share in the fruit of restoration and the ushering in of a new creation.

The framework we will use will to explore this biblical worldview story is:

1. Creation and Cultivation
2. Disobedience and Distortion
3. Redemption and Recreation

### Creation and Cultivation

We must first acknowledge that God as creator has not stopped creating. The Genesis creation narrative tells us that God paused or “rested” after the initial fundamental creating of the universe. However, the rest of the biblical story suggests to us that God continues to have an intimate sustaining relationship as creator with His creation. In speaking of the majesty and supremacy of God, Job gives us an insight into God’s continual creational influence:

*How great is God—beyond our understanding!  
The number of his years is past finding out.  
He draws up the drops of water,  
which distill as rain to the streams;  
the clouds pour down their moisture  
and abundant showers fall on mankind.  
Who can understand how he spreads out the clouds,  
how he thunders from his pavilion?  
See how he scatters his lightning about him,  
bathing the depths of the sea.  
This is the way he governs the nations  
and provides food in abundance.  
He fills his hands with lightning  
and commands it to strike its mark (Job 36:26-32)*

There have been times in the Christian churches history where it has been wrongly asserted that God is like the ultimate watchmaker who makes the perfect watch and then winds it up, places it in a glass display cabinet and stands back and admires its perfect workings as all of intricate parts and systems go about their perfect cycles and sequencing. However, it would be more helpful to say that it is much more like God as creator sets up the world spinning like a basketball on His finger. Not only is he making constant micro-adjustments of the orientation of His finger to maintain balance, he must sustain the spinning by continuing to give the ball just the right amount of motion at the just the right angle with his other hand. God created and continues to create by intimately sustaining the “balance” of creation.



This sustaining happens in direct and indirect ways. When we think of God's beautiful creation our minds are often taken to scenes of waterfalls, amazing landscapes or the curious nature of deep sea marine life. However, why do we not consider a justice system that successfully upholds law and order in a community and protect the rights of the disadvantaged, or an unselfconscious humorous interchange between two people, or the innovation of a vaccine that rids the world of a child-killing disease. Is not God in his sovereignty behind these snapshots of creation also? God does create and sustain *directly* by keeping the planets in motion and the instinctive reproduction systems of animals functioning. However, we need to acknowledge that he also *indirectly* creates and sustains by blessing humanity with the ability to invent and innovate, do justice, produce art, love, learn, laugh and lead. Al Wolters helpfully suggests to us that, "everything that humans are and do is thoroughly creational".



God placed Adam and Eve onto the centre stage of this perfect creation and gave them a mandate to rule over it and to be stewards of it. It is like he said to them, "take the 'stuff' of creation, nurture it, look after it and now go ahead and cultivate it". He didn't just mean the physical creation (e.g. rainforest ecosystems): he was also referring to the good creational essence of human endeavor (e.g. structures of society). If we use the fullest sense of the notion of culture, God gave humanity the mandate of being *culture creators*. Christian education may sometimes stop at the exploring of the laws of creation and the leading of students to a point of wonder and awe in God as creator. However, we must also lead our students to explore the "laws" of culture (as part of creation). We must encourage them to explore and navigate towards these creational norms. This is not always easy as these laws are less clear. However, clarity is gained here by coming back to the crux of the biblical worldview story: the cross. What it means to be a culture creator is unfolded in community as Christians gather to explore the defining centrality of the cross and what it means to live a Christ-like life.

Do we want to produce graduates of our Christian schools that are simply well trained units of labour shaped by the western worldview of a safe life, secure career and the freedom to consume and be entertained? Or, are we wanting to produce disciples of the Lord Jesus who acknowledge that God has given them a creational mandate to transform their world as culture creators in their submission to the cross?

*What are some of the implication for Christian education in taking a "watchmaker" view of God as creator*



reflection

## 5. Biblical Worldview: Disobedience and Distortions

Not all human endeavour can be described as "good". Due to the disobedience of Adam and Eve back in the perfect garden, the human heart is now broken and its loyalties distorted. Sin now characterises the human condition. The human heart's default

condition is to serve its own desires and to serve false idols instead of its creator. However, this sin and disobedience did not only affect Adam and Eve and their descendants - the whole of creation was tainted. In the account of the rebellion in chapter 3 of Genesis we learn that "cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life". In chapter 8 of Romans we learn that the whole creation is groaning under the weight of this sin. The disobedience of Adam led to a distortion in the whole created order.

The big picture biblical story, or worldview, highlights through many twists and turns in the narrative that the original good creational essence, that God looked on and proclaimed "good", still remains. Sin has resulted in a distortion of the human heart away from God and has rendered creation into a state of groaning, but creation is not defined by this distortion. If creation were to be thought of as bundle of electrical wire, the strands themselves have not been distorted or damaged but the flow of current has reversed its direction to now lead away from the creator. Because humans have engaged in casual multi-partner sex, same gender sex, prostitution and rape, it does not mean that this strand of creation is bad. Sex is part of the good creational essence when enjoyed in the way it was intended when God had made it and looked at it and said it was "good". The existence of totalitarian power-abusing governments does not mean that leadership in itself is bad: it is also part of the good creational essence. Dancing is good despite it being distorted at times by sin. Movies are a form of storytelling and there is a rich creational essence to be found in the telling of stories. Evil and unsavory movies do not change this truth.



Exploring the disobedience and the distortions of the fall brings us to the point of crying out for the cross of Christ and the promised redemption and restoration. Christian education must be careful not to dwell on the distortions that have resulted from the fall and "protect" the students from certain strands of creation that are deemed to be sinful in their own right. We want to produce graduates who embrace their calling to be culture creators and who, despite knowing that they desperately need the cross of Christ as result of their own disobedience, are able to explore the creational essence in all things with redemptive courage.

reflection

*Can you think of 3 more creational "strands" that are in essence good but are sometimes deemed to be bad or evil by Christians?*



## 6. Biblical Worldview: Resurrection and Redemption

The life, death, resurrection and enthronement of Christ, and the subsequent redemption of his people, are the culminating and pivotal events of the biblical worldview story. However, just as the fall affected all of creation, the redemption and reconciliation bought by the resurrection of Christ also had cosmic impact. In chapter 1 of Colossians Paul highlights the scope of what was achieved on the cross by describing the supremacy of Christ in these terms:

*For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. (Col 1:19-20)*

Is there anything outside the category of "all things, whether on heaven or on earth" that won't be reconciled by the work of the cross? The emphasis in the big picture biblical narrative is the redemption of human hearts and the reconciliation of a people to himself. However, it is also clear that the whole creation is being redeemed, reconciled and recreated. What is our involvement in this? Paul not only suggests that "all things" are being reconciled by the cross but in chapter 2 of 2 Corinthians he suggests that humans have an intimate involvement in this reconciliation.

*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation... (2 Cor 5:18)*

If God's creating work includes sustaining the physical creation and working indirectly in cultural creation, then His redemptive work through Christ will also involve a restoration of the physical creation and the work of redeeming the distorted aspects of culture. All of creation is fallen with humans playing a pivotal role, but all of creation is redeemable and there is a clear sense in which God is involving humans in this also. Or in other words, Adam's people perverted the creation but Christ's people are involved in its renewal. If we consider the bundle of wire strands again representing creation, the gospel of the Lord Jesus reverses the current, or direction of loyalty, enabling human repentance, the natural world to be restored and for the cultural strands to be redeemed.

When Jesus proclaims the coming of the kingdom of God, he speaks of the reconciliation and redemption of creation. It will be a kingdom where he will have his rightful place as supreme and sovereign king. There is, however, a sense of *now but not yet* to this kingdom. In Jesus' ministry on earth, he not only preached the coming of this kingdom giving descriptions of its both radical and glorious nature but he also demonstrated the kingdom as if it had begun. The kingdom was demonstrated by him reconciling people to their creator and turning around the flow of loyalty in their hearts. He also demonstrated his power over creation by restoring people to health, calming storms, changing a little food into an abundant feast and bringing the dead back to life.



Let's again give our attention to the students of Christian education. We may well be inspiring them with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus and the awesomeness of the cross. However, are we also inviting them not only to be culture creators but also to be ministers of reconciliation in this world; a reconciliation of all things. Are we producing graduates who understand that marriage should be considered not obsolete but sanctified; emotions not repressed but purified; sexuality not shunned but redeemed; politics not decreed *off limits* for Christians but embraced as an opportunity to transform; art not proclaimed worldly but claimed for Christ.

*Does "preaching the gospel" simply mean telling people about the Lord Jesus and what he has done? What other life-impacting aspects of the good news could be communicated?*



reflection