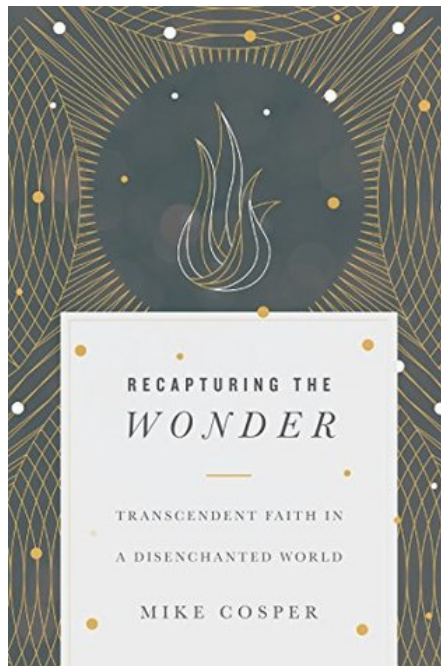




Recapturing the Wonder: Transcendent Faith in a Disenchanted World

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When we're young, it's easy to believe in the supernatural, the mysterious, the enchanted. But as we grow older, we learn to be more "rational" and more confident that reality is merely what we can see. Even as Christians who believe in the resurrection, we live as if miracles and magic have been drained from the world.

As Mike Cospers wrestled with his own disillusionment, he found writers, thinkers, and artists like Hannah Arendt, Charles Taylor, James K. A. Smith, and David Foster Wallace whose words and ideas reassured him that he was not alone. And he discovered ancient and modern disciplines that shape a Christian way of life and awaken the possibility of living again in an enchanted world.

Exquisitely written with thoughtful practices woven throughout, this book will feed your soul and help you recapture the wonder of your Christian walk.

Recapturing the Wonder: Transcendent Faith in a Disenchanted World Details

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From Reader Review Recapturing the Wonder: Transcendent Faith in a Disenchanted World for online ebook

Brian Daniel says

Recapturing the Wonder is both timely and important. I picked it up for multiple reasons, but primarily because of what the title promises and what I know about its author, Mike Cosper. What Cosper has done here is for the most part take readers through something akin to the practice of the spiritual disciplines, yet with so much of a fresh touch. Quite different from the white-knuckled clinches of traditional approaches to the disciplines, Recapturing the Wonder paints a picture of a beautiful life lived within the will of God, a life moving "easy within the harness" as Robert Penn Warren wrote. Cosper's language and message is both authoritative and profound, with brushes of the poet in places. If you'll let it, this book will change the way you approach your faith — in the best, most subtle way. Equal parts corrective and exhorting, I recommend Recapturing the Wonder to those looking for a fresh start, those that might feel stuck or stagnant, or those looking for renewed inspiration in their lives and faith. I also recommend checking out Mike's podcast Cultivated.

Shannon Whitehead says

"Recapturing the Wonder" was a great work and a quite personable read. It often felt like the author was simply telling me his thoughts, conversationally. At first I was concerned that the book would take a "write yourself into the Bible" approach, but I was pleased to discover that the author had an approachable manner of breaking down spiritual disciplines, why they're still very vital to growth in Christ, and tips for making them a part of your life. At the same time, the book didn't emphasize being disciplined in spiritual disciplines for the sake of marking them as done, but instead illustrated the beauty of God and the Kingdom of God that is available to us through His Word and Spirit. The author was able to give a modern voice to the wonder of who God is and encourage readers to slow down and experience Him in our distracted, disenchanted world. It's the type of book that I wished everyone I knew was reading so that we could discuss some of the author's points and challenges to us together.

Trevor Weaver says

One of the most refreshing books I've read in a while. Cosper doesn't suggest anything revolutionary, but he looks back on spiritual disciplines that reorient our minds to be Kingdom focused. I recommend this to anyone who might be struggling with doubt, connecting with God, and inconsistency towards a spiritual life. It's a short read, but you can chew on each chapter for weeks at a time.

Caleb Davis says

This was by far one of the best books on the spiritual disciplines I've ever read. Cosper does a fantastic job of story-telling throughout the book as well as giving you tangible ways to grow in your daily walk with God. I had a tough time putting this one down!

Barry says

Of all the books about the Christian disciplines (or habits of grace) that I've read, this is probably my favorite so far. I'm not saying that it's better than Foster, Willard, Bonhoeffer, Ortberg, Mathis, etc. It just spoke to me more. Now if I could stop just reading, and start doing...

Bob says

Summary: Explores the disenchantment many Christians experience living in a modern secular age and the practices that may "re-enchant" our world with the supernatural presence of God.

Thoughtful commentators from Charles Taylor and Hannah Arendt to James K. A. Smith and David Foster Wallace have observed how we live in a disenchanted, disillusioned secular age. In this work Mike Cospers engages these commentators and how the disenchantment of the modern world affects Christians' experience of the reality of God. He writes about the contrast between an enchanted world and a disenchanted one:

"Perhaps to best understand disenchantment, we can look at its opposite, the 'enchanted' world of a few centuries ago. In that world, men and women saw themselves as spiritual creatures, vulnerable to blessings and curses, to angels and demons, and subject to the god or gods who made and oversaw the world. This enchanted world was part of a Cosmos, an orderly creation full of meaning, a place with a purposeful origin and a clear destination, guaranteed by the god or gods who made it and rule over it. At the same time, this Cosmos is full of mystery, a place where our knowledge has its limits and an unseen spiritual realm is constantly at work, shaping our everyday experience.

In disenchantment, we no longer live in a Cosmos; we live in a universe, a cold, hostile place where existence is a big accident, where humanity is temporarily animated 'stuff' that's ultimately meaningless and destined for the trash heap" (p. 11).

For many Christians, the Word of God becomes an abstraction--concepts rather than the living Word of the Living God, working in the world. What Mike Cospers seeks to do in this book is to explore both the corrosive effects of the secular world on our faith, and the practices through which we might recover a vibrant, transcendent faith whereby we recognize the presence of God in all of life.

Cospers begins with three chapters that chronicle the expressions of disenchantment in contemporary Christian life. After describing the disenchantment, he chronicles our modern efforts to self-justify through constructing a social media persona as our modern religious sacrifices that the God of grace mercifully brings to an end. Likewise, he reminds us of the recent focus of many churches on hype and spectacle instead of the slow, steady rhythms of grace by which we encounter God in the ordinary rhythms of life.

In the next three chapters, he commends several practices that break us out of the self-hype spectacles--solitude and secrecy, abundance and scarcity, and feasts of attention. He commends having a life beyond what we post on social media. He uses Lewis Hyde's *The Gift* as a parable of living generously and honoring the gifts we receive as well as those we give. He invites us into a life where we feast on giving our attention to God's world, and sometimes to feasts themselves.

The seventh chapter was of great interest. He looks at Thomas Merton's *Seven Storey Mountain* and Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. I was intrigued, having recently read the later (reviewed here). He suggests both

were seeking transcendence, Merton through a rule of life, and Kerouac, through attentiveness in the moment. Recognizing the downsides of each lifestyle (most of us don't live in the monastery, and Kerouac's road was tremendously self-destructive), he suggests we need both.

Each of the chapters concludes with spiritual practices connected to the chapter. Cumulatively they help us focus on God in our hours, days, weeks, and years, and special seasons and feasts of the church. We learn examen, Ignatian prayer and praying the Psalms, practices of solitude and silence, fasting and feasting, and how to weave all of these into a rule of life. The author shares his own rule, one that struck me as marvelously do-able.

There are a number of books that have been written about our secular age. Likewise, a number have been written about spiritual practices. The particular gift of this book is the bringing of the two together, pointing to the importance of, and telos of these practices. Cosper helps us see that through them, we recover a sense of the greatness of God in the ordinary of our hours, days, weeks, and years--which make up a life. More than this, he captures something of the deep joy of secrecy, or a long leisurely feast with friends, or seeing an abstract Word come alive to us. One senses that you are walking alongside one who is recapturing the wonder of a transcendent God who is also immanent in our world--and that we may as well.

Cat Caird says

This has probably been my favourite book this year. Mike Cosper explores the ways in which our society is disenchanted, no longer believing in mystery or the supernatural and how that has dripped into our church and our beliefs. He implores us to bring back the wonder and awe of Christianity and helps the reader explore different ways to do that. I personally found it refreshing and creative, it was like stepping through the wardrobe into Narnia and being captivated by the wonder and awe of Jesus again.

Alexiana Fry says

“This is an age where our sense of spiritual possibility, transcendence, and the presence of God has been drained out. What’s left is a spiritual desert, and Christians face the temptation to accept the dryness of that desert as the only possible world. We have enough conviction and faith to be able to call ourselves believers, but we’re compelled to look for ways to live out a Christian life without transcendence and without the active presence of God, practicing what Dallas Willard once called ‘biblical deism’ — a strange bastardization of Christianity that acts as though, once the Bible was written, God left us to sort things out for ourselves.

In such a world, the Bible feels like a dead text and our prayers seem to bound answerless off the drywall... We might be fluent in the language of faith but unable to pray, overwhelmed by fear and anxiety, and victim to the compulsive, distracting habits that fill our age. We might be able to articulate the doctrine and dogma of the gospel but feel as though we’re doing so from the outside looking in.”

In a world where I find myself compulsively checking my phone as a liturgy, as soon as I wake and before falling asleep, dissatisfaction and the need to be omniscient have been illuminating my face every single day with the glow of the screen. I found myself counseling someone one day to take a step away and rest, while ignoring the fact that the Spirit had those words for me. Like the above quote said, I found myself fluent in the language, but my heart had forgotten the language. Lord, have mercy. Loved this book.

Jason Kanz says

I picked up Mike Cospers's *Recapturing the Wonder: Transcendent Faith in a Disenchanted World* (2017) from the Intervarsity Press table at the AACCC world convention along with a few other books. I tucked it in my briefcase and when I got home, shelved it. Thankfully, I didn't forget it was there because this book is excellent.

I found myself immediately engaged in this book. He writes of a modern faith that has somehow lost its sense of mystery and wonder, a supernatural faith stripped of the "super" and thus becoming mundane. He observes this trend and tells his readers "open your eyes!" I have been trying to communicate this message to fellow believers, and I don't know if the message ever lands. Often, I suspect I am regarded as either a religious nutjob, or simply as kooky. Honestly, I'm okay with those characterizations, but once one has tasted supernatural wonder, he wants to invite others to the same. When one recognizes that God's kingdom is so much larger and more glorious than most people ever imagine, he wants to shout, "come and see! come and see!"

I cannot commend this book strongly enough. If you find your faith boring, mundane, or disenchanted, please get this book and read it. I don't think you'll regret it. The last page and a half of the book proper (149-150) are alone worth its price.

David says

Every now and then I get rather cynical about the world. Recently I had been reading some Jacques Ellul, rethinking some ideas from Charles Taylor and just observing our culture. I concluded that we were all so secular, even we Christians, and there was nothing we could do about it. It's the world we live in, forces bigger than us. Even if we raise our kids in the faith, their faith is always going to be tenuous in a way their great-grandparents' faith was not. It's not that we shouldn't try, but we're really up against it.

Cosper's book is sort of a book about spiritual disciplines. But he writes with the surrounding culture, and the work of people like Charles Taylor, in view. He does not shy away from the fact we live in a secular age. If anything, he emphasizes it. He tells a story in the first chapter about a clearly manipulated religious "miracle" at a church service. It was so obvious it was fake. Cosper says his dad wondered if it was real, which shocked Cosper. How could any sane person think a real miracle had occurred. This is what it means to live in a secular age - we all, automatically assume the miraculous is highly unlikely, if not absurd. Our first reaction is always skepticism, even if we are Christians. This assumed skepticism makes living faith different today than in the past.

Cosper's book examines different attributes of contemporary culture and offers time-tested spiritual practices as a way to, as the title says, "recapture the wonder." Much of what he says echoes people like Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen and others. Rather than seeking to manufacture religious experience, what if we looked to the roads our predecessors had taken. As far back as Elijah in the Old Testament, there was the recognition of finding God in the silence. Cosper ends each chapter with a few practices the reader can do.

Cosper is a good writer and each chapter is both challenging and easy-to-read. This book could be used in small groups. Besides the spiritual disciplines, he makes ideas from people like Taylor, David Foster Wallace and others accessible. In other words, this is not just another book on spiritual disciplines, but is a

book in conversation with some pretty big thinkers. Further, it is a bit more broad and approachable than perhaps Merton or Nouwen.

There has been a revival in spiritual discipline in the last decades. We've had the aforementioned Catholics Merton and Nouwen (and others), the Quaker Richard Foster and the recently deceased Dallas Willard all writing on spiritual practice. My favorite recent book is *Liturgy of the Ordinary*, by Tish Harrison Warren. Cosper's book, like Warren's, seems uniquely fitted to everyday Christians trying to incorporate spiritual practice in the daily grind of life. If you're looking for a practical, challenging and applicable book that will give you some hope in the darkness, check this one out.

Speaking of hope, this book helped me in my latest bout with cynicism. Maybe, just maybe, it is possible to have a vibrant faith and a taste of wonder in our world today.

Eileen Mulshine says

This book is very relevant on the how to proceed to live in the Presence of Jesus while living in the post modern era and in the culture of today. Giving suggestions on how to go about doing this has been quite helpful. Interestingly, even the monastic Carmelite order of the Roman Catholic Church has recently opened it's door to lay persons, who continue to raise a family and work in the secular world, yet are now able to be a part of this community. Interesting to ponder.

<http://ocarm.org/en/content/ocarm/wha...>

I did enjoy this book greatly thanks to my son's Mother's Day gift to me.

Laura says

Quite possibly the most necessary book I've read all year. It met me directly where I am--a little cynical, a little skeptical, too easily distracted & entranced by the shiny and shallow, and sometimes too quick to dismiss ordinary gestures. I can't count the number of times his words echoed things I've been reading, saying, writing, and thinking already. It was eerie how often I read a paragraph and realized I'd had that exact thought or conversation with my husband. Then I'd watch as Cosper wove each of these familiar strands of thought into his greater thesis, which is that the way to warm your heart back up to experience wonder and beauty again is nothing new. In fact, it's through practices that are very, very old.

I've read a decent amount about attention spans (mostly because I feel so keenly the tug of our distracting world) and this was by far the best book on that subject that I've read. Cosper doesn't just acknowledge the problem (as Tim Wu does so thoroughly in *The Attention Merchants: The Epic Scramble to Get Inside Our Heads* and Matthew B. Crawford does so well in *The World Beyond Your Head: On Becoming an Individual in an Age of Distraction*), he actually charts a course out of the land of disenchanted boredom and constant distraction. His solution? The ancient disciplines of the Christian faith. Prayer. Communion. Fasting, yes, but also feasting. And his solutions are so simple and generous that you find them irresistible. He describes fasting in a way that makes you want to fast--he's not showy or extreme, not promising anything more than a simple reorientation of your hungers that points you towards the kinds of desires that really need satisfying. Then he describes feasting in a way that makes you want to throw a dinner party. Tomorrow, if possible.

This is very much a book for my generation. We grew up on spectacle-based youth programs and grew to love the church in spite of it, but perhaps we've all grown a little cynical in the process, which leaves us cold

to even the possibility of real surprises. We don't want to be emotionally manipulated, so we won't fall for anything. But this leaves us immune even to the moving power of beauty and simple acts of grace. Cospers can quote 30 Rock and Robert Capon and David Foster Wallace and G.K. Chesterton, moving seamlessly between pop-culture references and ancient wisdom.

Not only that, he ends the book with such a gracious acknowledgment that the disciplines in and of themselves are not a means to an end. I don't want to spoil the ending (even though it's not really a story you can spoil) because it is such a lovely, kind, generous way to end the book.

If you're interested in reading more about the changes occurring in this generation, consider:

Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business

The Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction

The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age

Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World

Andrew Brantley says

This is a great book to read with Alan Noble's "Disruptive Witness". Both of them try to help make sense of living with an authentic faith in a world that is so "disenchanted." Cospers provides 7 "pathways" / practices to help us live with transcendent faith in disenchanted world. He concludes that "Seeking God's face in a fallen world is not the easy life; it's the good life, and a good life is always a life of worthwhile stories and worthwhile struggles."

Doug Dale says

I wasn't able to see the totality during the recent eclipse but where I was, 95% of the sun was covered, so it was still a spectacular sight. I was surprised the next day when I heard people talking about how 'underwhelming' it was. I also heard of people discounting the experience of those who were lucky enough to see the totality and use phrases like "life-changing".

We've lost our sense of wonder.

So what a great 'coincidence' that this book came my way a couple of weeks later. A loss of 'wonder' is a particularly troubling thing in the Christian, and I think Mike Cospers does a great job of analyzing this problem and providing some very simple suggestions that might help reorient us to the wonder of God and the world he has made, even in the middle of sin and suffering.

I already want to reread this book and I would recommend it to anyone who is sensing this disenchantment in their own life.

Jocelyn Green says

While some of the chapters had less relevance for me than others, I did come away from this book with plenty of food for thought.
