

BRINGING THE AWE OF CREATION INTO THE WORKPLACE
By Erenia Mendoza

Mental and emotional health increasingly are reasons for great concern for every aspect of life. Especially for the demanding, high-pressure, fast-paced global marketplace. The causes are complex. Sometimes, however, solutions can be surprisingly simple.

In his studies on emotion and social interaction, Dr. Dacher Keltner, a professor of psychology at the University of California-Berkeley, highlights the value of using a stress reliever many of us would not consider: Nature. Keltner's research reveals the direct effects of immersion in nature on people's cardiovascular and cerebral systems. This experience, he says, not only has a profound impact on our bodies but also influences how we think about ourselves and understand the purpose of our lives.

Keltner's suggested immersion in nature is not just a secular idea. It is a topic that echoes throughout the Bible. From their opening chapters, the Scriptures reveal to us the grandeur of God's creation, inviting us to contemplate the immensity of the universe He has prepared for us.

Consider some passages we find in the Scriptures that reinforce the importance of recognizing God's perfect and divine work, and how they align with Keltner's observations:

Reflecting on God's greatness. "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands" (Psalm 19:1). In light of this scientific inquiry, we find an intriguing parallel with the biblical call to acknowledge the greatness of divine creation. The practice of getting a regular dose of this, as Keltner suggests, aligns with the Bible's suggested practice of contemplating the greatness of God:

Imagining God's love for detail. "Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. Because of His great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing" (Isaiah 40:26). What detail He has put into His creation!

Reveling in the wonder of God's creation. "But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish in the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this?" (Job 12:7-9). These moments of contemplation not only promote worship and awe, but also have positive, calming effects on our mental and emotional health.

Studies like Keltner's point to the awe we can experience when we slow down to pay attention to nature, laugh with loved ones, and spend time with our families. This awe comes from the recognition that we are part of God's vast, mysterious, and beautiful universe, and His divine

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plan and eternal purpose. Every tree, stream and sunset are living reminders of His greatness, care, and creativity.

As Christian business and professional people we should take time to admire His creation, contemplating details that often go unnoticed. This is not just a needed break from the hustle and bustle of life but an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of God's love and wisdom as revealed in His Word.

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. If you find yourself experiencing high levels of stress at work, how do you respond? What kinds of "stress relievers" do you typically utilize when this happens?
2. When you find yourself in the midst of nature – at a local park, going for a hike, walking through a forest, or just gazing across a beautiful lake or at some snow-capped mountains – how does that make you feel? Do you experience any of the calming effects that are suggested in this "Monday Manna"?
3. When was the last time you felt a sense of awe and wonder? When and where was this? Did this serve to draw you closer to God, sensing His greatness and creativity in a deeper, more profound way? We typically think worship occurs within the walls of a building we refer to as the "church." Do you think spending time in nature can enhance your worship of God? Why or why not?
4. Granted, there are some who take this focus on nature to an extreme, worshipping "Mother Nature." But this does not mean we should not take time to appreciate and enjoy God's creation, rejoicing in it and our relationship with its Creator. What are some ways we can do this while maintaining the proper perspective?

Challenge For This Week

When was the last time you determined to spend time enjoying God's creation? Take some time this week to pause from your responsibilities, deadlines, goals, and objectives not only to look at and recapture the wonder of nature, but also to pray and praise the Lord for all He has made. As you pray, ask God to allow you to experience His peace, rest, and joy.

NOTE:

For more about what the Bible says, consider the following passages:
Genesis 1:1-28; Psalm 8:1-9, 139:7-16, 145:8-12; Romans 1:20

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