

ART + FAITH
A Theology of Making

A Reader's Guide to
Culture Care Community Formation

by
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Introduction

“Art + Faith: A Theology of Making is the best book on the Work and Faith topic I’ve ever read.” Rev. David H. Kim, CEO and Co-founder of Goldenwood

I’ve said in the past that “the best book I can write is the one that I did not write but is ‘written’ by the readers’ responses: what they create in response to what I wrote.” I am grateful for my journey with my wonderful readers, specifically Justin and Margaret Campbells in Austin, Texas, and the invaluable advice from Rev. David H. Kim of Goldenwood relating to the work and faith sector. As you read *Art + Faith: A Theology of Making*, I hope this guide will help you personally and collectively to 1) enter my studio to gaze into my creative process; 2) apply generative principles to find your creative zone; and 3) help your own communities become generative and grow creatively and spiritually – whether it be church groups or arts groups. www.IAMCultureCare.com has great resources as part of Culture Care movement (IAMCultureCare is a not-for-profit organization that oversees Academy Kintsugi, Fujimura Institute, and Fujimura Fellows programs) to further assist you in creation of Culture Care communities.

This guide was written in collaboration with my bride Haejin who has played a key role in her own work as a lawyer and entrepreneur in connecting beauty with justice advocacy through www.EmbersInternational.org. Haejin is also the President of Academy Kintsugi, the somatic experience that I highly recommend for the communities taking up this *Art + Faith* journey to consider undertaking as well.

May the book written by the responses from the readers to my book ultimately become a masterpiece of God’s Making (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Makoto Fujimura

A note before you begin

This guide is designed to accompany the reading of *Art + Faith: A Theology of Making*. It is a 15-week journey that will require a commitment, not only to the content of the book and this guide but also to the reading group with whom you will be journeying. It will be good to consider this journey as an opportunity to grow as a person – creatively, spiritually, and communally – toward Culture Care.¹ “Count the cost” before you sign up for this journey and think of it as a “building up the muscles” of creativity, empathy, and connection with your community. Just like any commitment to exercise, it requires preparation. For artist types, it is likely that you have been thinking of your art and faith as two separate journeys. This experience will challenge that separation, and it will mean you may find yourself needing to develop a space of integration, which may feel awkward at first. For other readers who do not consider themselves to be artists, you may not think of art as a “creative catalyst” that can inspire and care for culture around you. These weeks will open your eyes – hopefully – to see yourself as someone “created to be creative” as well. For those participants who do not consider themselves to be Christian, welcome! While these exercises assume that you will “put on the hat of faith” in some way, Theology of Making does not require much religious dogma or your acceptance of the Creeds of a church; instead, it simply invites you to consider that “God is Love,” and we can connect through our Making.

The goal here is for you to grow together, in the way that Martha (analytical), Mary (intuitive), and Lazarus (experiential) found hope in Jesus together. These lessons correspond very naturally to the workshops offered by Academy Kintsugi. Feel free to request a certified instructor from Academy Kintsugi for a workshop called “Kintsugi Experience” as part of these sessions.² May we together birth a “Kintsugi Generation” to care for our culture by pouring gold into the fractures of our culture together.

¹ Culture Care is to see culture not as a battleground to fight over, but instead to see the soil of culture as a garden to tend, an ecosystem to steward.

² Contact Academy Kintsugi via Instagram or Twitter @academykintsugi and learn more about it at www.culturecarecreative.com.

A note to facilitator of reading group

During the 15 weeks of this guide, we want to create a safe space for all so that you can share a transparent journey of creativity. If you are a church leader, try not to use “Christianese” to explain concepts, but translate to common language and expressions. Listen and take notes to observe, rather than “fix” conflicting issues or correct “wrong theology” during group discussions. The discussion questions anticipate the presence of seekers in the audience, and they invite into a dialogue those who may have been alienated from the church as a result of Culture Wars. It’s important for leaders to exhibit the following qualities:

- 1) The analytical hospitality of Martha
- 2) The intuitive creativity of Mary
- 3) The relaxed confidence of Lazarus

No one has all these qualities together. So, we encourage you to use these 15 weeks to identify where you need to grow and being that process for yourself.

You do not have to be a professional artist to be a leader, but it is important that you see yourself as a Maker of some kind. For the group, designate a meeting space that promotes creativity and imagination. Showcase the work products. Bring food. Play music. Recite poetry. Be creative, playful, and caring. Hang out and have dinner together (perhaps to end the 15 weeks). Go to museums and concerts together. Celebrate.

If you find that people are afraid or shy about creating art, consider doing a “show and tell” time where people bring and introduce objects with memory attached to them: a stuffed animal from childhood, photographs of loved ones – anything goes. By doing “show and tell,” you often learn something new about a person, even if you have been friends for a long time. Sharing in and of itself is a form of Making – using words to connect with each other.

Also, this guide encourages you to think creatively about “play”. “Playing” video games or watching sports are not the kinds of play this guide is referring to. “Play” here needs to be about making and not consuming. Obviously, there are grey areas in some cases, so be liberal with the definition of “play,” and be ready to have the openness to help each other grow.

Additional video resources are available for some of the weeks. They are created by Windrider Productions and are designed for group discussion in sequence.³

There are creative assignments that go along with the book and discussion questions. Set aside time to complete them.

Most of all, enjoy the journey!

³ <https://www.windriderproductions.com/theology-of-making>

Week 1 N.T. Wright's Foreword

Share

What made you commit to this group for 15 weeks? What is "Culture Care" that Theology of Making champions? Who is it for? Is it only for artists?

Discuss (Facilitator can pick 2-3 questions each week)

- 1) How does Fujimura's book support or amplify Wright's theology?
- 2) How does Jesus usher in the New Creation?
- 3) How do Beauty, Justice, and Mercy relate to the New Creation?
- 4) How does *Art + Faith: A Theology of Making* apply to those who do not consider themselves to be artists? Why does Wright suggest that this book is a good read for the Lenten Season of the church?

Meditate (Each week you will be given a passage of the Bible to contemplate throughout the week.)

Hebrews 11

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1)

Exercise

Calendar at least an hour each week for these exercises. Some of the later exercises will require more time, but we will gradually build our "muscles of creative imagination."

This week, pick an artwork, piece of music, or a poem to ponder. Write down why you selected that particular work to share next week. Spend at least 20 minutes in front of a painting, or listening to music, or read aloud a poem several times. What makes this exercise difficult? Stay with the work until you discover something new about it. How does Hebrews 11, which you are meditating on this week, speak to such an experience with a work of art?

Watch Windrider Productions film "Theology of Making" trailer, located at the following:
<https://www.windriderproductions.com/theology-of-making>

Week 2 Chapter 1. The Sacred Art of Creating

Share

What did you choose to focus on for your exercise and what you have discovered? Note what others in the group chose and keep that in your mind to discuss later. Discuss Hebrews 11 and share how this definition of “faith” relates to “art.” What struggles did you have in the exercise to integrate your faith journey into the experience of art?

Discuss

- 1) How do you, or have you, experienced God’s Presence through beauty?
- 2) What prevents us from seeing ourselves as artists or at least “makers?”
- 3) Read Philippians 2:6-11 aloud. Do you think that the Christian gospel is a song, as Fujimura notes? How would our understanding of the gospel change if the gospel is a song that God sings through us?
- 4) Is it shocking to hear “God does not need us?” Why is it important, first, to recognize God’s All Sufficiency and “Aseity”?
- 5) Fujimura discusses two different ways of learning something: one analytical and the other somatic. How do you react to the statement that “our journey to God requires not just ideas or information, but actual making?”
- 6) Fujimura states, “Imagination gives us wings to create, but it is through the tears of Christ and the invitation to the feast of God that we can partake of the New Creation.” What is Biblical imagination? How do we access that?

Meditate Genesis 1:1-2

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep,
And the Spirit of God as hovering over the waters.
And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

Consider

“God’s presence is real, even in the midst of oppression and darkness. God is the light that shines and places limits on evil and injustice on the earth... What if we began to live our lives generatively facing our darkness? What if we all began to trust our intuition in the Holy Spirit’s whispers, remove our masks of self-defense, and create into our true identities hidden in Christ beyond the darkness?” (*Art + Faith: A Theology of Making*, p. 11)

Exercise

This week, drawing on whatever is already available to you in your life, choose a way to practice the art of creative making. Try to create a dedicated space (what Fujimura calls “Emily Dickinson’s 17 ½ x 17 ½-inch cherrywood desk”) where only your creative expressions are worked on.

Consider this space, however small, to be a “sacred” space. As you do, consciously invite God the Artist to join you and be attentive to the Divine Presence.

Watch Windrider Productions film “Creation: class 1”, located at the following:
<https://www.windriderproductions.com/theology-of-making>

Week 3 Chapter 2. The Divine Nature of Creativity

Share

What did you make last week? What were some challenges that you experienced while trying to be a maker? How did you overcome them? How did Genesis 1 speak to you?

Discuss

- 1) What does Fujimura mean by the “intuitive knowledge?” Is it in opposition to the “rational knowledge” or is it connected in some way?
- 2) What is the danger of the “utilitarian pragmatism”?
- 3) How do you understand Fujimura’s point about “sanctified imagination?”
- 4) In your life, are there things that are extra, or even useless, but essential because they are life-giving to you?
- 5) Have you experienced the abundant exuberance of God in the Creation?
- 6) When you were a child, what was it like to play?

Meditate Genesis 1:27-28 (translated by Makoto Fujimura)

So God created humans in God’s own image...
God blessed them and said to them,
“Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and steward over it.
Care over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky
And over every living creature that moves on the ground”

Consider

“Making is the fundamental reality of Homo faber (man the maker, not just Homo sapiens) and what uniquely defines our role in Creation. We are Imago Dei, created to be creative. ...It is hard work to live into this generative love, but it is what we are made for: to paint light into darkness, to sing in co-creation, to take flight in abundance.” (*Art + Faith: A Theology of Making*, p. 14)

Exercise

This week, set aside time for making as pure play – doing something you enjoy without any concern to accomplishing anything, or impressing anyone. Give yourself time and space to simply enjoy what you do. As you do, meditate on the above scripture passage.

A simple suggestion: Take two small pieces of paper of the same size (an index card is fine, but watercolor paper would be wonderful) and a small set of watercolors. Simply drip onto the surface of one piece, and sandwich it with the other blank piece, and twist both pieces of paper together. What do the shapes of watercolors on the paper remind you of? Name the abstract shape you’ve created, let it dry and bring it to class next week.

Watch Windrider Productions film “Nihonga”, located at the following:

<https://www.windriderproductions.com/theology-of-making>

Week 4 Chapter 3. Beauty, Mercy, and the New Creation

Share

How did your approach to making as “playing” as opposed to “doing homework” help in your time of making? What came out of that time? Do you think Genesis 1:27-28 is connected to “play” as much as “purpose?”

Discuss

- 1) Why are beauty and mercy contrary to the notion of “survival of the fittest?” How are beauty and mercy key to the gospel?
- 2) Discuss Fujimura’s experience of realizing that the Sermon on the Mount was preached in the abundance of Creation, as the Jordan basin is one of the greatest migratory paths for birds. How does that reality of abundance add to our response to Jesus’s command to “look at the birds of the air” or “consider the lilies?”
- 3) Distinguish between “Plumbing Theology” and “Theology of Making” or “Theology of New Creation.”
- 4) What is the difference between “fixing” and “making?”
- 5) What does Fujimura mean by “wasting time?” Have you experienced a meaningful moment that came out of unplanned time, or have you been surprised by people who cannot give you anything in return?
- 6) Fujimura says that “fruit” is a generative word. Compare the “fruit of the Spirit” passage in Galatians 5, and the preceding sentences where Paul describes the “fruit of the flesh.” Which passage describes our culture today? How can the “fruit of the Spirit” be operative for your lives, and define our culture?
- 7) How do you understand Fujimura’s statement that “God invites us to co-create?” How does God’s Love manifest itself in the possibility of our own creation becoming part of God’s New Creation?
- 8) Discuss Fujimura’s sand-castle parable. What surprised you when you read this parable? How does this parable challenge the typical understanding of what may last into the New Creation? How would your “Making” be different when you begin to understand this possibility?
- 9) How does “authority” become key in stewarding a sanctified imagination?

Meditate Psalm 104:14-15

He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate-
Bringing forth food from the earth:
Wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine,
And bread that sustains their hearts.

Consider

“Could it be that what is deemed marginal, what is ‘useless’ in our terms, is most essential for God and is the bedrock, the essence, of our culture? Could it be that our affinity for the utilitarian pragmatism of the Industrial Revolution created a blind spot in culture that not only overlooks

great art, but if purity of expression is compromised, could also lead us to reject the essence of the gospel?” (*Art + Faith: A Theology of Making*, p. 17)

Exercise

This week, spend time assuming that the world around us is in God’s abundance, full of grandeur and delight – even if you are going through a hard time or facing difficult news. Write down observations and create something (art, poem, song, etc.) out of them. Often it takes a few tries to get “making” going, as it will require intentionality and set up. Be patient with yourself but take small measurable steps that you can share with the group. When we are sensitized to the beauty and abundance of Creation, and as we offer thanksgiving to God by “wasting time,” how does that experience change our focus? Does that make us attentive to those around us as an act of mercy?

Watch Windrider Productions film “From Creation to Fall: Honeybees”, located at the following: <https://www.windriderproductions.com/theology-of-making>

Week 5 Chapter 4. Kintsugi

Share

What are you grateful for? How does that posture help us in making and in the appreciation of Creation? Share what you experienced from the previous week in seeing the world around us as God's abundant gift, perhaps despite challenges you face.

Discuss

- 1) Describe what Kintsugi is. Why is it more than "fixing?"
- 2) What does it mean to "name" the fragments or chips?
- 3) How does Kintsugi help us to stay within the assumption of abundance that we focused on last week? How can we see our setbacks, flaws, and broken experiences differently?
- 4) According to the Bible, "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8). How does the metaphor and practice of Kintsugi capture and enlarge this promise for you?
- 5) How do you respond to Fujimura's highlighting of Christ's wound in his post-Resurrection appearances?
- 6) How do you understand our making that leads to the New Creation?
- 7) How does the Kintsugi process help us to be aware of our own brokenness? In the brokenness of others?

Meditate Isaiah 53:10-11 (written approximately 700 years before Jesus's birth)

Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer,
And though the LORD makes his life an offering for sin,
He will see his offspring and prolong his days,
And the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.
After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied.

Consider

Consider doing Kintsugi Experience with your reading group. Do you have anyone that you might want to invite into reading *Art + Faith: A Theology of Making*? Are there people in your community who deeply care about culture? Consider inviting them to participate in a Kintsugi Experience session with your reading group. You can inquire about Kintsugi Experience sessions by emailing Academy Kintsugi at hello@culturecarecreative.com.

Exercise

Watch Windrider Productions film "Kintsugi", located at the following:
<https://www.windriderproductions.com/theology-of-making>

Think about this metaphor of Kintsugi as it applies to your life. How can we be more open to brokenness around us? How does that help us to create into the New? Begin to look for broken

ceramics and other fractured items in your surroundings. Imagine that in their brokenness, beauty might be made “New” when you mend them. How would you name these broken areas or fractures of the object?

Week 6 Chapter 5. Caring and Loving, the Work of Making (Part 1)

Share

What have you discovered from broken objects around you? Bring in a piece that you've found. Begin the "Kintsugi process" by beholding the object to seek its "broken beauty."

Discuss

- 1) How do you relate to Fujimura's account of trying to make an omelet from a recipe? What is the difference between "recipe knowledge" or "informational knowledge" and actual making? Share your experience of trying to make something that turned out to be more challenging than you expected.
- 2) Drawing upon philosopher Esther Meek, Fujimura challenges us to see the connection between i) caring and loving and ii) making and knowing. How does Meek's approach to knowing reveal a gap in our assumption about knowledge? Why is this important in education?
- 3) In his discussion on Genesis 2 (of "naming the animals"), Fujimura connects naming to knowing. In what ways does the experience of dating amplify this connection? How is going to a museum, listening to music, or experiencing cinema a way for us to "name" the world?
- 4) What is your reaction to the statement: "Jesus promised us an abundant life (John 10:10) but not an easy one?"

Meditate John 16:33 (Jesus the Good Shepherd)

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world!

Consider

"In reading the epistles, we find more Christians suffering because of their faith than being prosperous and happy because of it. Christians' happiness is quite different from the world's. Jesus promised us an abundant life, but not an easy one (John 10:10). It is through the threads of suffering, persecution, and life's difficulties that God weaves a tapestry of hope toward the New. Just like the art of Kintsugi, what once was broken is repaired not to hide its flaws but to celebrate them as part of what is to become beautiful." (*Art + Faith: A Theology of Making*, pp. 65-66)

Exercise

Visit a farm or a zoo and spend some time observing sheep or other animals. Capture your observations in words or images. How do the animals relate to the world? What are the challenges they would face if they were in the wild? What makes sheep and other domesticated animals unique and valuable?

You, or one of the participants, might be going through a difficult journey, whether that may be illness, brokenness in relationships, or hardship. Consider how New Creation can enter into such

a challenge, and how Making into New Creation can help reshape the difficult journey you or your friend is going through.

Watch Windrider Productions film series under “Fall” including “Fall: class 2”, “Ground Zero” “Reflection” and “From Fall to Redemption: Holy Saturday”, located at the following:

<https://www.windriderproductions.com/theology-of-making>

Week 7 Chapter 5. Caring and Loving, the Work of Making (Part 2)

Share

Discuss the images or notes that you made during your visit to a farm or a zoo. What did you discover? How is Jesus the Good Shepherd walking through life with you?

Discuss

- 1) Discuss Lewis Hyde's concept of a "Gift Economy." How is a "Gift Economy" different from the transactional market economy that we are used to? Is a "Gift Economy" separate from, or opposed to, capitalism, or, as Hyde claims, is it an essential part of capitalism? How so?
- 2) How is art a gift and not a commodity? Discuss the statement, "Only one of these (economies) is essential, however: a work of art can survive without the market, but where there is no gift, there is no art." Distinguish the art that endures the test of time from the art that is strictly made for transactional gain in the market.
- 3) How do you understand Fujimura's statement that "The river of culture has led to a dehumanized view of art, its beauty robbed by over-commoditization" (p. 67)? How does a "gift economy" make possible a "humanized market economy?"
- 4) How is this "gift economy" connected to what Christians celebrate as the Good News?
- 5) In your own words, how do you understand "knowledge through connaturality?" What is the role of creative intuition in our knowing "connaturality?" What practices would train us to know connaturally? How does Japanese culture inform us to experience this integrated knowledge?
- 6) Respond to the statement: "As we understand fully the gospel and the hope... what matters most is what we make, and what we love based on what we come to know by our making in this deepest, nonnatural realm of knowledge." How do artists help us in understanding this statement?
- 7) In what ways have you experienced the Christian Eucharist? How might it be possible to have the "presence of the Risen Christ" present in the ordinary elements of the Eucharist? Why is this important for art and life?

Meditate 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 ("New Newness")

What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard,
And what no human mind has conceived -
The things God has prepared for those who love him -
These are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit

Consider

"No matter how we view the reality of God's presence at the table, whether as symbol or as the reality of Christ's body, the Eucharist opens the path for the Theology of Making. Pauline language here suggests that the powerful new reality breaks as a new paradigm for the old path, as this New Creation (Greek *kainos ktisis*)." (*Art + Faith: A Theology of Making*, p. 74)

Exercise

What type of art, music, theater, dance, or poetry captures this “New Newness?” Does it have to be explicitly “Christian” to convey this sense of mystery and awe? Seek out this week some form of artistic expression that exemplifies the New Creation as seen from this side of eternity. Go to a museum, concert, or poetry reading, or, if possible, go backstage of local theater group and ask God to open your eyes. Get to know an artist in your community by reaching out or visit a studio simply to experience the New there. If you are unable to go out, consider reading a book or poems or see films available to you and apply “New Newness” to what you have experienced.

Week 8 Chapter 6. Seeing the Future with the Eyes of the Heart

Share

What did you observe in your encounter with the arts? How did you sense the New in specific works you observed or the creative spaces you visited?

Discuss

- 1) In Fujimura's experience with the *Sea Beyond* painting on the beachfront in Southern California, what stood out to you? Do you think this was just a "coincidence?"
- 2) In Isaiah 65: 17, 24, we read "For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. Before they call, I will answer, while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Discuss how this passage speaks to Fujimura's experience, and what you discussed in question 1, especially in connection with trauma or darkness.
- 3) Have you heard in a sermon that "the future is going up in flames?" What is a "theology of evaporation," or "theology of extinction," compared to "Theology of Making" or "Theology of New Creation?" If the "Bible is not about the End; it is about the New," then what difference does that make in how we view the Christian community and the Christian message?
- 4)
- 5) How do you respond to C.S. Lewis's notion of "horses with wings?" What are some challenges in being changed from a horse that "jumps higher and higher" to becoming a horse with wings? What kinds of community do we need in order to "grow our wings?"
- 6) Read aloud together the entire second paragraph on p. 80 ("The Bible begins with the Creator creating the world..."). Does this overview of the Bible make sense to you? How does this view differ from other ways to understand the Bible? Share with the group about your understanding of the Bible while you were growing up.
- 7) Why is imagination part of faith? What does Dr. Ellen Davis note of the link between imagination and "heart" on p. 85?
- 8) How do artists and creative people render perceptible "the substance of things hoped for" and create the "evidence of things not seen?"

Meditate Philippians 1:9-10

And this is my prayer:

That your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight,

So that you may be able to discern what is best

And may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ

Consider

"The true and lasting understanding of the gospel is not whether we can recite our creeds, or even are able to convey the information of the gospel to others; the ultimate understanding of the gospel is what we make, and what we love, with what we know, or that deepest realm of knowledge that is garnered through our making. This is the deepest cultivation of the soil of our minds and culture. This is the path to be "filled with the Spirit" (*Art + Faith: A Theology of Making*, p. 72)

Exercise

Imagine opening the “eyes of your heart,” to see God’s enduring future unfolding now in you and in the world. Ask God to help you imagine your enemies as friends, to see the world of abundance even when faced with scarcity. Create something out of that experience this week, whether that be art, music, cooking, letters to a friend, serving in a community, or being part of a worship service.

You may know of someone, or perhaps yourself, who is visually impaired. How does that journey amplify our longing to see with the “eyes of your heart”? Even though that person may be faced with challenges and scarcity, I’ve often found that a visually impaired person can help me to “see” better.

Watch Windrider Productions film series under “Redemption” including “Redemption: class 3”, “Kintsugi” “Reflection” and “Redemption to New Creation: Silent Steps”, located at the following: <https://www.windriderproductions.com/theology-of-making>

Week 9 Chapter 7. Imagination and Faith (Part 1)

Share

How are your wings? Are they growing? Did you try something new last week, take a risk, and fail? If so, please share with the group. Remember that your first few months will be awkward and full of “failures,” but in this group, attempting something new is always welcomed.

Discuss

- 1) Read the first paragraphs of this chapter aloud with each other. Which “what if” questions stood out to you? Why is it important to ask “what if?” questions?
- 2) What is Culture Care? How does the Theology of Making support the Culture Care thesis?
- 3) Discuss Dr. Curt Thompson’s quote (p. 89). Share examples of how we have inverted this bottom-up, right-to-left approach in education and in the church.
- 4) Discuss William Blake’s quote (p. 90). What was your reaction when you read this? Have you had an experience with your own gifts of making?
- 5)
- 6) What does Fujimura mean by giving “exceptionalism for Artists?” If God is THE Artist, then what does it mean to see William Blake’s quote from God’s aseity?
- 7) Do you think all Christians are “Artists of the Kingdom?” What would change if we all believed that?

Meditate Ephesian 3:20-21

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine,
According to his power that is at work within us,
To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!

Consider (From last chapter, but read this passage again, now, considering yourself as an artist)

“Christians are ‘horses with wings’; yet our preaching and teaching tend to encourage us to jump higher and higher, rather than to risk using our wings. Lewis is right; wings, yet unformed, do look awkward, and yet the way to grow them is to actually dare to use them. Of course, as many artists know, it requires many years of failing to grow wings. A church should be a place of nurturing those wings: a context and environment for failing many, many times” (*Art + Faith: A Theology of Making*, p. 79)

Exercise

Read aloud Psalm 1, Isaiah 61:3, and Revelation 22:1-2. What these texts have in common are the trees – trees as a metaphor for those who have New Life in Christ. Yes, trees provide shelter and food but also beauty; but the main thing that all trees do is to convert toxic carbon dioxide into life-giving oxygen. This occurs in the leaves of all trees. Listen to this [Culture Care podcast episode with Susie Ibarra](#). How could your leaves and music heal the nations? How could you convert the

toxic carbon dioxide of the culture of your region into life-giving energy? As a tree with roots deeply planted in the presence of God, how could you prosper for the good of those near you?

Week 10 Chapter 7. Imagination and Faith (Part 2)

Share

How has your view of the world has changed while going through the *Art + Faith: A Theology of Making* book? Do you see yourself differently?

Discuss

- 1) Read together Genesis 2 as quoted on pages 95 and 96. What stands out to you? What surprises you?
- 2) Why did God invite Adam to name the animals?
- 3) Why were precious gold and minerals hidden beneath the earth in Eden? Why would God hide things even before the Fall?
- 4) What does Adam do in response to God's creation of Eve? How does this song prophetically connect to the notion that "a union between a man and a woman, a union that will lead in time for a cosmic wedding between Christ and his Bride, the church?"
- 5) Do you think, as Fujimura notes, "All art, in some sense, is 'naming?'" How would you explain this concept to someone who considers imagination and art dangerous to faith?
- 6) In Fujimura's story of the Bronx Zoo and raising his children in New York City, what resonated with you? What are the challenges of creating a "discovery zone" in your home and in the church where "Yeses" begins to replace "noes?"

Meditate Isaiah 55:12-13

You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace;
The mountains and hills will burst into song before you,
And all the trees of the field will clap their hands,
Instead of the thorn bush will grow the juniper, and instead of briers the myrtle will grow.

Consider

"Creativity is given to us as a chief means to be caretakers and active stewards of the earth. First, we are to dig deep into the earth to discover good materials: 'the gold of that land is good' (Genesis 2:12). Second, we are to be involved in creative work, whether in Eden, or in the world after the Fall, or in the New Kingdom to come. Even in Eden, the gold was hidden. We have work to do." (*Art + Faith: A Theology of Making*, pp. 97-98)

Exercise

Pick broken objects, unique trees, or animals, and name them this week. Why did you choose the names you chose? Read a poem by Wendell Berry, Mary Oliver, or John O'Donoghue. Think about the connection between naming and writing poetry. Try writing a poem with the names you chose.

Week 11 Chapter 8. The Journey to the New Through Christ's Tears (Part 1)

Share

Talk about your naming practice. What was difficult about naming? Which poem did you read? What did you discover through your reading of a poem?

Discuss

- 1) Discuss how a pin-hole camera works. Why do you think the “Jesus wept” passage, the shortest sentence in the entire Bible, is the most important “pin hole” to Fujimura?
- 2) Take a look at The *Four Holy Gospels* book (or visit Fujimura’s [Four Holy Gospels](#) website). How does “Jesus wept” guide Fujimura’s illumination works?
- 3) Fujimura invites us into his post 9/11 experience (his “Ground Zero experience”) and speaks of suffering and making it out of the trauma. In what way is Christian faith not merely an assent to dogma, but a personal journey with Christ marked by His suffering? Have you experienced the compassion of Jesus Himself through your suffering or the suffering of others?
- 4) How does Japanese concept of “*wabi, sabi*” inform your understanding of beauty and mercy? Discuss examples of something that is well worn from loving use.
- 5) Why is it so remarkable that Jesus resurrected as a human and, not only that, as a *wounded human*?

Meditate John 11:35

Jesus wept.

Exercise

This week, try to see the world through the “pin hole” camera of the “Jesus wept” passage. How do you create through Christ’s tears? Even if you are not an artist, stay attuned to what is being sacrificed as you create a meal, during family conversations, or through some other communal experience. Try to see Jesus’s tears through these and other ordinary experiences. Think about how businesses can be a place of meaningful empathy. What difference will that make in understanding the world? Some may find this particular exercise to be confusing or challenging. That’s okay. Take note of what you find yourself thinking about as you consider Christ’s tears. Create paintings pretending to paint with Christ’s tears mixed with paint.

Watch Windrider Productions film series under “New Creation” including “New Creation: class 4”, “Columbine” and “Reflection”, located at the following:
<https://www.windriderproductions.com/theology-of-making>

Week 12 Chapter 8. The Journey to the New Through Christ's Tears (Part 2)

Share

What have you discovered about the world through the “pin hole” of Christ's tears? Share some of the struggles you experienced in connection with last week's exercise. What did you make last week?

Discuss

- 1) Regarding Jesus's tears for Mary, Fujimura states, “The thesis of the Theology of Making hinges on this gratuitous act of Jesus.” Discuss your understanding of the Theology of Making, and how John 11:35 opens up this way of journeying through the Bible.
- 2) Summarize Martha's journey up to this point in John 11. What is she like in Luke 10? What is her strength? What is her weakness? Do you see a change in Martha, as Fujimura suggests, in this passage of John 11 to 12?
- 3) How do we listen to the “small voice” of God in our lives? What prevents us from hearing God's small voice?
- 4) Read the quote from George Eliot, in *Middlemarch* (p. 107). Fujimura notes, “Art also reveals the ‘roar which lies on the other side of silence.’” Share an example of an artist you know, whose work reveals the roar on the other side of silence.
- 5) Share why utilitarian pragmatism can get in the way of deeper contemplation and enduring experiences?
- 6) Why is it “Wrong to simply pigeonhole Martha as an overly busy do-gooder” as Fujimura suggests? What about Martha's analytical response do you appreciate in understanding the gospel?

Meditate Philippians 3:10-11

I want to know Christ — yes, to know the power of his resurrection
And participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,
And so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

Exercise

In Chapter 8, Fujimura writes: “Every act of creativity is an intuitive response to offer back to God what has been given to us.” This week, “waste” some time with God. That means that we are not trying to accomplish anything that is résumé-building or filling the “bottom line.” Sit in silence, take a walk, listen to music, allow your imagination to give you wings to create, and focus on the presence of God. Then do something creative (*e.g.*, paint, draw, read, or plant a flower) for the *Audience of One*.

Week 13 Chapter 8. The Journey to the New Through Christ's Tears (Part 3)

Share

What have you created and/or discovered while “wasting time” with God and others? When you were not “wasting time,” what did you notice about the rest of your “normal times” of busyness?

Discuss

- 1) What do you think Mary saw in Jesus's tears? What was different about her response from Martha's response?
- 2) Did you notice that the two sisters said exactly the same thing to Jesus? “If you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Compare and contrast Jesus's response to the two sisters. Why were the responses by Jesus so different? What does that tell us about communication or the art of education?
- 3) What about Mary's extravagant offering bothers us? What did Judas do in response? What did the disciples say? Read Mark 14:6-9 and imagine being in the room with the disciples. What shocked you about Jesus's response?
- 4) If Fujimura is correct that Mary's nard is the “only earthly possession Jesus carried to the Cross,” why is this detail important in understanding the Cross of Jesus? What other “weddings” can you think of in connection with Jesus?
- 5) This “pouring of wedding nard” story is in all four of the gospel narratives. What difference do these stories of extravagance make in the cultural setting experienced by the early church?
- 6) Have you ever experienced someone breaking into the “inner circle” and the discomfort and awkwardness that materialized in the group? How have you personally responded?
- 7) Imagine yourself to be Mary. What kind of fears did she have in bringing the expensive wedding nard to Jesus? What caused her to break through her fears? What did she see and sense that the disciples could not yet see? How did Martha help Mary?
- 8) Give an example of art, music, or creative offerings in history that mirror Mary's act. How do you understand the following statement by Fujimura?: “All art resonates from the aroma of Christ as he hung on the cross. Art seeps out like Mary's nard onto a floor that is supposed to ‘clean;’ such art reveals what is truly beautiful (Mary's act) and what is truly injurious (Judas's act) at the same time” (p. 117).

Meditate Ecclesiastes 3:11

He has made everything beautiful in its time.
He has also set eternity in the human heart;
Yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end

Consider

“What makes us not just good, not just right, but beautiful? . . . It's one thing to aspire to make our work, our businesses, our arts, and our political endeavors good and even ‘successful.’ It's another to aspire to make them beautiful. It's one thing to try to educate and raise our children to be good

and ‘successful,’ but it’s another to try to raise them to be beautiful – not superficially beautiful on the outside, but truly beautiful on the inside.” (*Art + Faith: A Theology of Making*, p. 118)

Exercise

Visit a “Mary” this week. Visit an artist’s studio, backstage of a theater, a jazz concert, or a poetry reading. Perhaps they are not artists, but observe the work of a gardener in your community or a volunteer at a soup kitchen. Perhaps they are non-religious, or even a self-proclaimed atheist-artist whose work intrigues you – but pay them a visit. Pray beforehand for the Spirit to open your heart and your eyes. Be proactive in blessing them. Buy their art! Subscribe to a local avant-garde theater that you may not fully understand. The amount of monetary gift is not as important as your heart and your care for them.

In addition, this week is a good week to start pondering how you might start a “Culture Care” group in your church, community, or school. This does not have to be a “Christian group” at all, but a safe space for integrated thinking and living, where you can bring Martha and Mary together with Lazarus. Each community has unique challenges and strengths. Start making a list of what makes your community unique. Are there artists in your midst? Are there “creative catalysts,” or stewards of culture in your mix? Who may provide funding for growth (it can be very small, as creative capital can multiply such a generous gift)?

Again, Academy Kintsugi is a good entry point to find people interested in healing, arts, and cultivation in your community. Consider hosting an Academy Kintsugi workshop.

Week 14 Chapter 9. Christ's Tears in the Cultural River

Share

What did you do to find a “Mary” in your community? What did you learn? When did you feel like you failed to understand or communicate?

Discuss

- 1) Look at the works of Mark Rothko. Of course, in person is best, but online is a good start. Do you find work like this difficult to “understand?” What is your response when you do not understand a foreign language?
- 2) Read a few lines from T.S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets*. Do you find work like this difficult to understand? In a few short lines, Eliot concisely speaks of certain grand themes. What are those themes?
- 3) Discuss Fujimura’s experience on the subway after 9/11. Read East Coker, Section III. What stands out to you? Which part is difficult to “understand?” Can you stay with those difficult lines? Who would you ask to help you journey more deeply into this poem?
- 4) What is the difference between the way that Bruce Herman experienced his devastation and a typical response? Read Symeon the New Theologian’s quote (p. 128) and discuss how this understanding of God’s fire echoes Rothko, Eliot, and Bruce Herman.
- 5) Discuss Melissa’s line from page 130: “Lord, use this food to prepare us for our deaths.” How is her statement similar to Mary’s act of anointing Jesus?
- 6) If we can choose to be “in the pyre” of God’s fire, how does that attitude help us in facing our challenges today?

Meditate Luke 3:16

John answered them all, “I baptize you with water,
But one who is more powerful than I will come,
The straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.
He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Consider

“The church is to be a fiery body, like the bush that was burning but not consumed; and we need to be an enigma to the world around us. Holy fire IS burning within us, and we can, with faith, see the presence of Christ in all places.... We can not only see burning bushes, but we can walk in a burning city and live and breathe among the burning people of God. We are burning, yet not consumed.” (*Art + Faith: A Theology of Making*, p. 129)

Watch Windrider Productions film series under “Redemption” including “Redemption: class 3”, “Kintsugi” “Reflection” and “Redemption to New Creation: Silent Steps”, located at the following: <https://www.windriderproductions.com/theology-of-making>

Exercise

Contact the “Mary” of your life and follow up to see if that person will allow you to witness their creative process. Ask that person to help you to understand Rothko or Eliot better. What about this person seems like a “burning bush” to you? What about their art?

Begin a list of members for your Culture Care group. Make sure that it has the three capitals that Fujimura speaks of in his Culture Care book ([or view this presentation Fujimura gave at Stockholm School of Economics](#)): 1) Creative Capital (of the “Mary” you have been getting to know); 2) Material Capital (funding or space); and 3) Social Capital. These “capitals” can be represented in three persons or in a single person.

Week 15 Chapter 10. Lazarus Culture

Share

Talk about your journey with “Mary.” What have you found challenging? What did you make this week?

Discuss

- 1) Discuss the significance of Holy Saturday, sandwiched between Good Friday and Easter. How does “waiting” become a discipline toward hope?
- 2) Imagine Lazarus’s experience. What did he experience in the hopelessness of his illness? What would he have felt when he heard the voice of Christ? Have you experienced hope through words of others?
- 3) Fujimura states, “Do you know that we have today, spiritually and historically, more than what Lazarus had then? We live on the other side of the resurrection – not the temporary resurrection of Lazarus, but the permanent resurrection of Christ.” Consider the possibility of such a miracle happening, as God creates outside of Time and Space. What would it mean to practice “resurrection” every moment?
- 4) What would happen to our culture and our community if we lived in the “relaxed confidence” of Lazarus, reclining at the table with Jesus? What do you think of Lazarus’s response to Mary’s extravagant act in the same chapter, John 12?
- 5) Read Psalm 121, a short “Psalm of Ascent.” What does it mean when Fujimura says (in “Our Emmaus Road Journey”) that these Psalms have become Psalms of Descent after Jesus’s resurrection?
- 6) Discuss N.T. Wright’s quote (pp. 142-143). How does Wright’s statement change our understanding of the gospel?

Conclude

Bless the group by reading aloud together “A Benediction for Makers” (p. 150).

Meditate Hebrews 11:6

And without faith it is impossible to please God,
Because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists
And that he rewards those who earnestly seek him

Consider

“Why is that important? Our understanding of our faith depends on it! For Christians, the narrative of the Good News, a narrative that begins in Creation and ends in the New Creation, is not a tool to manipulate others or a checklist of good behaviors. The Good News is that we are freed from our perpetual struggle to be gods ourselves.... Once we understand that God does not need us, but despite all of our short-comings, God chooses to love us nevertheless, we are free. We are free to love; we are free...to “waste” time, with those who may be outside of our utilitarian, survival

values. We must realize that all that we are, and all that we see, is created in genuine and gratuitous love, and therefore we can love extravagantly and create beauty. Beauty and mercy are extravagant because God simply created an overflowing abundance in the universe and put us in a place of stewardship.” (*Art + Faith: A Theology of Making*, pp. 143-144)

Exercise

Look at Fujimura’s painting “In the Beginning – John” and spend time thinking about the “sounds you hear” while looking at something. Talk to your “Mary” about such a possibility. Explore by making, opening your heart to the beauty all around us. As Eliot stated, “The end is my beginning.”

As we say “Fare Forward” to our group, continue to cultivate your relationship with one another and with the “Mary” of each person’s life. Consider establishing a regular Culture Care group that journeys into cultural spaces, reads together, shares recipes, or gardens together. Connect with [IAMCultureCare](#) through their newsletter and events.