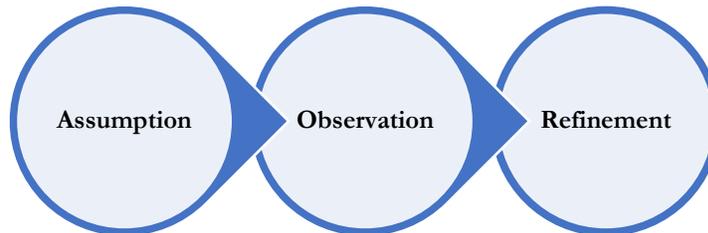




# How Do You Find God in the Ordinary?

I thought it would be helpful to show readers the mental process I go through to [find God in the ordinary](#). This may get you closer to applying what you've read in the book, which is the goal I had in writing it in the first place! I've broken my process down into three steps with an illustration and some examples. We start with an *assumption*, then move to *observation*, and then a *refinement* of our observation with Scripture. I should say, however, that my assumptions and observations are shaped by Scripture from the outset.



**The Assumption:** We start with the assumption that *everything* in the world reveals God. Everything. That truth is made abundantly clear in Romans 1:20, and it's reinforced by passages such as Psalm 19:1–4. We don't just *hope* God is revealed in something we see around us; we *know* he is. We have to start there.

**The Observation:** Now make any observation you like. Really—anything at all. Take your dog, for instance. Here's our dog, Buckley (may he rest in peace). Let's get more specific. I've observed him sleeping on the couch many afternoons, buried in pillows and wrapped in blankets like royalty. His sleep reveals something about the character of God. What, exactly? Sabbath rest? Peace? We need a biblical perspective, a microscope given by God himself that shows us more deeply what Buckley's sleep is pointing us to, so we move on to refinement.



**The Refinement:** What does Scripture tell us about sleep and rest? Well, God was the first one who rested, modeling it for us (Gen. 2:1–2). And he sets apart a day of rest as holy. In fact, in Exodus 31:13, God says something quite profound (he always does): “You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, ‘Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you.’” Do you see the purpose for the Sabbath rest? It’s *sanctification*. That’s somewhat surprising, since most of us only go as far as to say that the Sabbath day is set apart for our relaxation. The latter is certainly true, by *why* did God do this? Exodus 31:13 tells us the purpose: that we may know that God *sanctifies* us. Rest is a part of our being made holy!

Now, take that truth, and go back to Buckley sleeping on the couch. Buckley is *not* an image-bearer of God, so he’s not being sanctified by his sleep. (Though if he were, I would be happy to find fewer chewed up crayons underneath our dining room table.) However, his sleep is related to the rest that all animate creatures need in God’s world. *His* need for sleep reminds me of *my* need for sleep. But my need for sleep also brings out my need for continual sanctification. Buckley sleeps to rest his tired frame; I sleep so that God might conform me to the holiness of his name.

So, Buckley sleeping on the couch is a sign pointing to the sanctification that results from rest—a work for which God is wholly responsible. A daydreaming dog can serve to remind us of a Christ-conforming God who shapes and molds us even in our sleep(!), to the image of his Son.

### Example 1: My Coffee Mug

**The Assumption:** This never changes: God reveals himself in *every* single thing that has been made.

**The Observation:** There are many features of my mug that I could observe, so let’s take a number of them. The hardness of the ceramic keeps its shape fixed and stable. The mug is decorated with an image: the logo for Westminster Theological Seminary. And then there’s the shape to consider: the elongated cylinder impressed with various contours. So, I have stability, image, and shape.

**The Refinement:** What could Scripture possibly have to say about my coffee mug? Look closer. The stability of the mug, the density of the molecules that make up the ceramic, is a reflection of the ultimate stability for our world: our heavenly Father, “with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change” (James 1:17). The Father is supremely stable. And because the world reflects him, we find analogous stability in the objects around us. My mug is stable because the Father is stable. What about the image? Well, Scripture is chalk full of language about



man being the image of God (Gen. 1:27; 5:1–2; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; James 3:9). Yet, it is also clear that the ultimate image of God is the eternal Son (Col. 1:15; 2 Cor. 4:4), who is the exact imprint of the Father’s nature (Heb. 1:3). We were created as image bearers of God, according to the divine template of the eternal image of the Father, the Son. And we, in turn, make little images of other parts of creation. The symbol on my coffee mug is an example; it’s an image of a larger reality. My mug has an image because the Son is the Father’s image, and so imaging is built into the structure of our world. And the shape? The shape of my mug is comprised of the relation of my mug to the surrounding atmosphere. My mug has a discrete form—it’s molecular structure contrasts with and is related to everything around it—because of relations. The shape includes both what the mug is and what it isn’t; the space taken up by the substance but also the space left free (for coffee or water). On a far deeper level, the Spirit of God provides the relation for the Son and the Father. Paul refers to the Father as God and to the Son as God, but he also refers to the Spirit as God (2 Cor. 3:17). The Spirit is the divine person in whom the Father and Son relate with unimaginable intimacy. Recall that it was in the descending of the *Spirit* that the Father proclaimed his love for the incarnate Son (Matt. 3:16–17). In the Spirit lives the love of the Father and the Son. The Spirit is the personal hearth of their relationship. All relational connections in our world are smaller images of this ultimate relational connection. So, my mug really has a shape because the Holy Spirit is the personal relation for the Father and the Son. My mug, in all its simplicity, is a table-top arrow pointing to the Trinity.

## Example 2: My Pen

**The Assumption:** You know this already.

**The Observation:** Again, even with simple objects, there are lots of observations we could make. Let’s focus just on the basic function of the pen. When I press it into paper, ink is released through the tip, marking the page. How can this little function reveal the God of all things? We move to refinement to get a deeper sense of what’s going on right in front of us.

**The Refinement:** The pen marks a surface with my personal presence. The markings I make on the page are not just anyone’s; they belong to *me*. I made them in a way that is unique to my personality, muscle movements, and past writing practice. And most of the time, unless I’m sketching a diagram, I’m using *words* to mark the paper. In sum, I use an instrument and language to mark something outside of myself with my personal presence.



Now, take a step back and think about what happens at creation. The Father speaks the eternal Word in the power of the Spirit (Gen. 1:2–3; John 1:1; Col. 1:16–17). What happens

as a result of God’s speech (see chapter 3 in [The Speaking Trinity](#))? Something is manifested outside of himself, and that something (creation) ends up being revelatory of his personal presence. As Romans 1:20 says, “For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.” What God has made reveals who he is and where he is: *everywhere* (Ps. 139:8–12). The Father uses the joint instruments of Son and Spirit to mark the world with his presence. While God has certainly *spoken* reality into existence, there’s also a sense in which we could say he’s *written* reality. The pen on my desk is a testament to the God who has written everything and everyone—including every little image bearer that takes up pen and paper to mirror God.

Well, now you know how I go about finding God in the ordinary. I pray that you will be well equipped to go out into the world and use what you’ve learned to see the tripersonal God around every corner, in every shape, in every fiber and molecule of the cosmos. Stay tuned for other bonus materials that help you find God in the ordinary. Just visit the [Reader Resource page](#) for more!