

Re-discovering Outdoor Intimacy With God

(An excerpt from the April 1, 2009 broadcast of **Midday Connection** with Carol Ruhter)

**Object lessons from Creation help reveal truths about God and His plans for us.
Let these 5 questions help you see Him through His Creation.**

1. What element of nature stands out or draws me? Just as certain Bible verses jump out at us and reveal God's truth, God does the same thing through Creation if we're open to it.

Boundaries: When the women from *Midday* and *Trailbound Trips* were up at Dee Brestin's waterfront home in Door County, the November waves drew our attention. They pounded the beach close to her home, and it was obvious what those waves would erode and destroy if they failed to halt.

This object lesson helped us visualize what happens when we allow people and circumstances to cross healthy boundaries, and how that can erode and destroy what we value. God is the author of boundaries, and those waves made His words in Job 38:8-11 come alive: "Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb ... when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, when I said, 'This far you may come and no farther: here is where your proud waves halt?'" As we watched those waves, God helped us ponder where in our lives we need to say "This far you may come and no farther" ... and where we need God to stand guard as our break-wall.

2. What does this element of nature say about God? God's goodness is almost unfathomable. Sometimes we need it exemplified; Creation is a great place to see our Creator's wonderful qualities.

Leap of Faith: Is it sometimes hard for you to summon the courage or faith to go when Jesus calls? To understand how faithful and trustworthy He is? Wait 'til you hear about wood ducklings' leap of faith. Wood duck mamas nest 30-65 feet above the ground. Within 24 hours of when her eggs hatch, the mother duck calls the hatchlings to join her below the nest. By jumping. The ducklings can't yet fly, but they must abandon the nest and reach wetland food. Amazingly, these puff balls can leap 290 feet without injury... but they don't know that. All they know is their mother. So, they teeter uncertainly at the nest opening and then plunge to their mother.

This object lesson helped me understand that sometimes the only thing we need to know in leaps of faith is who we're leaping toward. Not why, where, how, or what's next. We know Jesus to be trustworthy and faithful to equip those He calls, and knowing that is enough. Remind you of Peter? (" 'Come,' He said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus." ~Matthew 14:2)

3. What does Creation's object lesson say about me? What snapshot does it provide of our spiritual health and who God has created us to be?

Imprint: I watched a maple leaf fall onto the first snowfall of November. Although the maple leaf was feather-light, when I picked it up, its delicate outline and network of tiny veins were already perfectly defined in the soft snow.

It leads me to ponder: When God's gentle words and guidance fall upon my heart, is my heart soft enough that they leave an imprint? Can others see Him in me? ("*... I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.*" ~Ezekiel 11:19)

4. What does it say about my present situation? Allow God to give you His perspective.

Resin-Poppers: A neat thing about pinecones on lodgepole pine trees is that many of them remain closed on the tree for years because of a resin that seals the cones shut. Only a forest fire's intense heat melts that resin, popping open the cones so their seeds fall on the fertile, freshly burned forest floor that is now sunlit and warm – a perfect environment for seed growth.

How does that translate to our present situation? Sometimes seeds of growth remain dormant in our lives because of resins of *comfort, convenience, and caution*. Is God turning up the heat in your life? Is there something lying dormant in your life that needs God's releasing flame, so you can experience His growth and plan? ("*I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God... For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.*" ~2 Timothy 1:6-7)

5. What can God teach me through this?

- **The Big Squeeze:** How many of you are feeling squeezed from all sides? Me too. Let me tell you about one of the most famous landmarks at Glacier National Park. This mountain is called Bearhat because it's pointed and shaped like a circus bear's hat. It got that shape when several glaciers eroded and gouged it from different sides.

Sometimes when we're being pressed and carved from all sides, it doesn't feel like the gentle hands of our Father at work on us. Yet let's ask: To whom, and in what ways, could God be shaping us to serve as trusted landmarks for others? ("*Yet, O Lord, YOU are the Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.*" ~Isaiah 64:8)