

A Theological Model between Personal Theology and Practice

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- [0 : 00] Well, first of all, good morning, and thank you everyone for having me here. It's a great pleasure to talk with you all. Just for the sake of information, my full name is Marcus Rafael Rocha Oliveira Alves Moreira, but of course, Marcus is totally fine.
- I'd like to share with you this morning this thing that I named a theological model between personal theology and practice. I hope that by the end of the talk, this title makes sense for at least some of you.
- And what I'm going to share is something that's been boiled in my mind, in my heart, since my first year at Regent College. A good deal of it is also a result of Barbara's work as also a student at Regent College.
- And the way we are going to approach it is a little bit different than I have seen and heard so often here in Learners' Exchange, in a small detail.
- Usually, speakers here come from a very theological and philosophical background, so they usually take one thread and develop this thread all over the end.
- [1 : 19] The way we're going to approach it is a little bit more how math is taught in high school. We're going to take building blocks and then put these building blocks together and see how they fit together.
- I hope nobody had a terrible math experience in high school, and I won't give recurring nightmare to any of you by saying that. But this is how we're going to do it, hopefully without further pain.
- So I'd like to share with you five building blocks. The five building blocks are going to be the concept of model. We're going to talk about the model, and a lot of people don't know what a model actually is in general, so we're going to tackle that.
- We're going to talk a little bit, a glimpse of set theory from mathematical set theory. Don't freak out about that. It's going to be quite simple. The theory developed by, presented by Foster and for a discussion, as discussed by Thiel, it's two philosophers that talk about the relationship between theology and science of nature.
- Just a glimpse of that as well. We're going to talk about what I mentioned, my definition of perception and praxis, and I put my, because on my search and my trying to figure out, if I read this concept as I'm presenting here today, somewhere else, I absolutely do not remember where this else was.
- [2 : 53] So if anyone when here thinks, oh, I think I know where you took this idea from, please let me know so I can give the proper credits to the original author. If not, this is a conception that I came for the purpose of this model.
- And the concept of theology in a little bit broader sense than usually used. And then we take these five blocks and build up together to build what I call a theological model between personal theology and practice.
- So, please join me. Well, first thing we're going to talk is, what is a model?

I put a small definition for you in the handouts, saying, a model is a systematic description of your reality or phenomena using a limited amount of variables or parameters.

When you're talking about a model, any kind of model, it's nothing beyond describing something, whether a phenomenon of the world or the full reality as we perceive it.

[4 : 07] It's a systematic description. So it's not just coming here and saying a lot of things for you, but it's a systematic description, and using a limited number of variables for that.

A lot of models are mathematical models. This one is quite famous. It's trying to describe force as a correlation between mass and acceleration.

We have the gravitational model that is quite more complex than it, because it's been so long I don't write it down. I won't try here, because I'm probably going to write it wrong. But we have use of models in different fields of science more often.

One very famous model that most of you must know is the atomic model. It has a very beautiful history of development on how it came to be, and it's still developing.

People first describe the model, the atom, as an indivisible unity, then as an indivisible unity with negative charges encrusted to it, then a nucleus with electronic circles around it, and nowadays a nucleus with a cloud of electrons around it, and it's going further and further as we understand better than atom and can describe it better with different properties.

[5 : 34] But if you have other things like the picture in the biological book of the digestive tract, that is nothing more than a graphic model of how the digestive tract works.

If you have something like the economic trinity in your theological studies, that is nothing more than a model to describe how God is three and one at the same time.

Or even if you go further, if you take psychoanalysis as presented by Freud, it could be understood as a model of how the human psyche works using a limited number of variables.

And so forth, and so forth. A good model, according to a friend of mine who lives by studying it, is characterized by three major things.

Simplicity, predictive power, and accuracy. A good model must be simple enough. If anyone ever heard about the Bernoulli formula, knows what I'm talking about.

[6 : 41] If not, it's a huge, massive formula, so complex that we cannot use that without a giant computer or without watering it down. It must have predictive power.

We must look to a model and be able to predict what's going to happen. When the food comes in the mouth, where it goes next, where it goes next, and where it goes next.

When we look to the formula, if I put a specific force, what's going to happen with the mass or how the acceleration are going to be changing. If I look at the Trinity, how the correlation happens, who sends who, and who is begotten by who, and so forth.

And also, it has to be accurate. By the end of the day, we want to describe something. If you're describing it wrong, what's the point of describing it at all?

Right? And once we're talking about models, I'd like to leave a small warning. Models have the danger, an intrinsic danger in it.

[7 : 50] And the danger can be taken in two ways. One is looking to a model, whichever model it is, and assuming it as reality. For example, Marx's model of describing society as the clashes between classes was easily taken so many times by a lot of political passionate people as a description of the full reality.

And the people start seeing reality as clashes of classes, and not just as a description, limited as any model is, of how society is.

We would have the risk of looking to the economic Trinity and think that exactly how God is, I hope nobody does that here, but there's a tendency of us to look into a model, especially good models, and think that the atom is exactly like that.

I just remember you that every model is very limited in what it can actually describe. Or, we have the danger of having a model as an ideal of how things should be.

If you take how our ecclesiology in terms of a description of how the church is, we sometimes have a tendency that the church should be like this or should be like that and hold that model as something to be achieved when more often than not, our goal is to describe how the church is as we see in the Bible, in the history, or in our community like here.

[9 : 25] And not about models, I hope everyone has a good grasp, good enough of what a model is. That's what we're going to get by the end.

If when I'm moving from one block to the other, it's too confusing for you, please let me know, because we have to put these blocks together by the end, and if one of them does not fit at all, it's going to be harder to put it together.

A little bit of set theory. Set theory is a branch of mathematics that studies sets. A set is a collection of distinctive objects considerable as a whole.

So, I'll just exemplify this case. We could take a set or a group of people who go to St. John's Vancouver. Most of, if not all of you, are sent would be in this set.

We could have another set of people who are kind of inside here, who is the clergy of St. John's Vancouver. We could have a third set of regent alumni.

[10 : 38] Alumni. Alumni. Thank you so much. I'll take the A for an I. Well. And the set of people who are regent alumni, some of them, some of them, fit as well as St. John's Vancouver church member.

And I'm almost sure that some of them are also among the clergy of the region of the St. John's Vancouver. So, these are different groups and math study how these different groups correlate to each other and how a member can be a member of different groups and in which degree.

That's enough for us about set theory. You just need to know that things can be gathered in sets and these things can belong to more than one set and they correlate to each other to a certain degree.

So, not too much math nightmares on this point. Let's move forward to our third building block. Our third building block is a very complex theory that I don't hope to tackle as a whole here.

It's developed by Foster in trying to explain how Christian theology affected, shaped how modern science came to be as we know it.

[12 : 03] It is further developed by this man named Thiel and his PhD, Paul Thiel and the way he's organized it is quite interesting.

You have an image in your handouts in which there's three concentric circles and here is theology, here is philosophy of nature and here is science of nature.

basically what Foster says in small words is that every theological proposition carries within it a logical development of a specific philosophy of nature and every philosophy of nature carries within it a specific science of nature.

in the Christian example the created word the word as having a creator carry within it a specific idea that whatever we see is made by somebody else and if it's made by somebody else we can take this thing and study this thing and analyze this thing just as we could take something done by Leonardo Da Vinci and observe all these properties and see what he did and this philosophy of nature specifically according to Foster created the empirical sciences of the modern time but Foster or at least still develops a little bit further and says that there is obviously a context in which a single individual can have one theological proposition which is not in accordance with his scientific way of seeing the world we are very complicated humans very idiosyncratic in some ways and he assumes that but he paints this picture as a society development and what he says is that there is a dialectic movement here as soon as a theological proposition is given it starts to influence dialectically the philosophy and the philosophy starts to influence it dialectically the science and the other way around also happens a specific scientific veil starts shaping a specific philosophy of nature and this philosophy of nature pushes back into theology we could observe this phenomenon if you take like a creationist god biblical god creates the word so we can observe it as we start to observe it we start to note that we don't observe god acting too much in this world so we create another philosophy that pushes back from a deist view of the world of the clockwork god that create the world and just let the world be as we see in later years after modern science come to be the things that I'd like you to grab hold here is that there is a dialectic relationship between a theological proposition with other areas and foster specifically is with philosophy and with science but I'd like to grasp this concept and as much as possible stretch it a little further are we in the same pace so far great we're almost there just two more building blocks to go this is going to be probably the hardest building block so stay with me if we're going to take the concept of knowledge and knowledge

I'd like not just what a specific individual or a group of individuals know but all the potential knowledge existent in the universe not only what we know but what it's possible to know so it's a very broad concept of knowledge right I propose that we can break knowledge in at least two different concepts as we achieve it it is information and what I call perception of course that I do not say that these are the only two but at least these two are possible to get hold what is information information is absolutely any piece of data our mind comes to grasp sensations life experience a formula that somebody gives you a history somebody tells you a feed on Facebook or Instagram or whatever people do these days a political propaganda all these things are pieces of information what I propose however is that as human beings we do not deal with information all the time we are always gathering information but you are not synthesizing this information all the time we develop something called perception perception would be then a synthesis of information that we create that we assume as corresponding with reality let me give you an example people in history noted that every day the sun rises and after a few experiences of the sun rising they start assuming that every day the sun will rise again people in time had a terrible experience of being chased by a wild cat and after being chased a few times they start assuming that wild cats are dangerous and you should run from it as soon as you find it this kind of adaptative phenomenon of creating a perception of reality exists in all areas of our life when you meet someone new we have information about them and synthesize a perception of this person it could be a friend it could be a not friendly person other information may come over time and as this information gather you may update your perception but you're not updating your perception of everything every time that probably would overwhelm our brains we have a limited data capacity of processing information right if you have a specific political view that your perception of politics will not change just because someone made a post on facebook saying that that your specific political view is wrong for whichever reasons that person thinks you may read it you may keep it as a piece of information to use in a given situation but your perception itself do not change the same thing can be said that each and every human being have a perception of god or divinity to a given extent keep a hold on that i also like to talk a little bit about praxis as i come to use it in this model praxis is just like perception the regular practice that we assume as correct when i say we assume as correct i'm not saying that we always make these decisions it's just a decision that we assume that it's correct to be taken in a given situation and note that practice

[20 : 08] sometimes goes against some information we have for example someone may say quite often that it's wrong to cheat on a test but a lot of teenage high schoolers may say that out and loud but if the opportunity comes for them to cheat on a test and they think they won't get caught they assume as correct to cheat on the test so you can have better scores for whatever reason at least of course i'm talking about brazilian reality i'm sure canadian teenagers are better than that and absolutely would not take this opportunity in their hands but brazilian teenagers would somebody may say out and loud that god is a god who answers prayers for example but whenever he sees in a dire situation he would assume that the best practice is first try his best to solve it and then god will join him in whatever he's doing rather than for example assuming that the first thing to do is pray and wait for god's answer and then engaging in activity right so what we say is not exactly always what we assume as how the word is what take us finally to our last building blocks so we can get somewhere right with our theological model and this one is a definition of theology as a field of knowledge the first time I mentioned knowledge as every potential bit of knowledge that exists in the universe and we

I propose that we can organize this knowledge in fields of common interests so when I'll be talking here about theology I'm not talking theology as a field of research like we have in religion college people who take study God study the Bible study the scriptures study other theological perspectives or people do in science of religion studying many many sets of religion it's a field of knowledge so theology as we are going to work on it it's all the potential knowledge existing in the universe in this sense related directly or indirectly with concept of divinity I will say it again theology as we're going to work with it is every piece of information perception data potentially existing in the universe that is directly or indirectly related with divinity theology so you can see that we're going to work with a very stretched concept of theology so many things that are not regularly put as a theological research for example how society should organize itself or how society actually works is usually a sociological knowledge would somehow then start fitting inside this broader understanding of theology because how society actually works has some indirect correlation with how we understand

God how we understand human beings how we understand human beings in society and so on and so on so I have to ask now before we move forward are we in solid grounds about our five building blocks so far solid enough so we can move okay so let's start building up our model so in the part here saying putting the pieces together I'd like to propose that we organize knowledge in sets right so if we put organize knowledge in sets I would propose that there are three big sets that potentially could englobe all if not all most of all the other knowledge the the three sets are theology philosophy and cosmology because there's a wild divergence which one is the bigger one

I won't make a case here for any of them well I will but I will not discuss this case which one is the bigger one but I will make a case that theology potentially is one of these three big sets of knowledge that can englobe most of all if not all other sets of knowledge right you could maybe put that philosophy it's going to stay here quite close and cosmology as well but as our purpose here is a theological model let's see we have a set of all the possible theological knowledge in the world things like what is the human being anthropology or psychology or what is society how society should work all these other sets of knowledge would be englobed somehow or to a given extent in this set of knowledge this is a two big set of knowledge for us to work with so I'd like to propose we take a smaller bit of this set and explore it further

I'd like us to build then a smaller set talking about one individual perception of the world instead of this huge set we take a very very very small set here of a single individual perception of the world and zoom it in this is what I call in the title personal theology this is the idea that this set represents everything that a specific human being has as his perception of reality what he assumes as being true about God it's important to say that what he assumes to be true about God is not exactly the same as what he confesses about God someone may come many times to different churches and confess for example the Nicene Creed but see the God as a unique block not a specific trinity someone may come and confess to believe in the active

[27 : 21] God in the world but actually have a perception of God of a God that is so far away so distant so out of reach that's not someone close enough that he can talk as the disciples did with Jesus for example so these different perceptions of a human being regarding God are possible but this individual has a specific set here and just like the broad theology of knowledge set encompass others this theological perception set would also encompass other perceptions so the human this individual perception of what the human being is his anthropology is right here whether he understands anthropology the human being as created in the image of God or just as a floating mass of atoms in a random order in the universe it's part of his perception of the world he may say something but his perception is unique and so on we could take here his psychology his any other sets that you want but I'd like to propose that because we're talking about perception and not only knowledge a part of it a small set that goes through all these sets is the sets of his praxis which is the attitudes that he assumes as being right given his perception of God of society of human beings of law etc etc etc so if we take these two building blocks sets and theology and add to it that proposition made by

Thiel and Foster that there is an interaction a dialectic movement going on between different fields of knowledge or different fields of perception in this case I would argue that one specific theological perception of God would put a dialectic pressure to shaping a specific practice to shaping a specific perception of human being a specific anthropology to shaping a specific perception of society and so on and so on and so on we will focus here today only in practices and theology but the model potentially could also be used to any of the secondary sets that are englobed here so what the fostering proposition makes is that a specific theological proposition shapes to a given degree a specific perception of what someone should be doing and the other way around a specific doing shapes a specific perception of God for those who were here yesterday on

Jeff Grimmons talk we'll make notes of correlation with what he said and what I'm proposing here right now about how our church practice shape or Christian character in our view of the biblical God and moving further and putting the final bits together understanding how practices and theology correlate I would say that our perception of God ultimately decides or shapes the way we live or our theology influence or practices in the world and vice versa putting in simple words I would say that the way we live talk more about what we think about God than what we say the best way for me to present why I got so so excited about this model

I believe is to explore a little bit what I perceive it capable to do for example if this inter dialectic dialogue between a personal theology a personal perception of God and practice is true as described here we could understand better things like conversion for example if you take a conversion phenomena it's a person who ultimately have a huge change on his perception of God it creates then a major change here because such a major such a huge change it kind of creates a shocking wave of change that overlaps on all his other perceptions anyone see a new conversion you can note that even the way he talks the way he walks the way he treats his family completely change seemingly overnight right and that's amazing that's beautiful and would be because this huge change would force a change in all the other levels but would also make us understand the importance for example of discipleship because if you follow up a new converter for a few months down the road if he's not properly cared by the church he's not keen to understand more about

God and scriptures what usually happens is that in just a few weeks he usually goes back to bad habits and if it goes further it usually people abandon the faith is it because his first perception of the salvific love of work of Christ of the God of scriptures and of redemption is not true no it's just that his practice over every day and every day and every day pushes back reshaping his perception of who God is to a dangerous point in which he stops seeing that love God who saved him and start seeing a distant God and maybe even not seeing any God or perceiving any God at all if you would stretch this model to other areas we could understand potentially why psychological treatments are so effective psychological treatment is a very inner part of

[34 : 35] Piske and when you treat it you create this changing force to other areas including our practice we could understand why monasticism is so powerful because it's shaping our perception of the world exactly through practice moreover for you who is going to be who are very well found of Craig Gates practical theology theology it could also model how practical theology come to be and how it actually works we live in a world that assumes that God is not existing that assumes that God will not come in your favor that assumes that God practical atheism sorry not personal atheism thank you practical atheism that assumes that God is not there and we start living that because there is a social pressure that we leave that way we wake up we go to work and we work work work come back eat sleep go another day over and over and over and start shaping to a given extent our perception of who God is and start shaping an atheist society start shaping our practice and this practice starts shaping our perception of God and we have this very interesting phenomena of

Craig Gates described so well of the practical atheist Christians who confess a love of God who confess a belief of God but live their lives as if God did not exist and even further we could understand for example how things like racism would work because a specific group of people would have a specific perception of another group of people and would hardly change this perception without a big change in other areas or how very godly Christian countries for many many years worked on slavery trade for example because although they had the confession of God their perception of human being the perception of who God is and their perception of how life is did not allow them to see the fellow human being who are they taking as slavery as as a slave as a image of God the same way they were thankfully

God is merciful with us and reshaped our perceptions quite often but this is why I've been struggling with this model for quite a long time and I'm really glad to share with you and leave it to your scrutiny the end comment but before I finish I imagine that some of you who may know a little bit more about philosophy for example may think look to my model and think that that looks very much with epistemological model model describe how people come to know things or maybe psychological model a philosophical model why did I call it in the first place a theological model right the reason for that is this model as it came to be and how

I developed it did not start as an enterprise to understand any of these concepts it actually started as a study of 1st Peter I was reading 1st Peter and was quite interesting in a specific part in 1st Peter when he says that we are holy priesthood and I was trying to make an argument saying that youth mater it was my first year range called youth mater the church was somehow failing because we are not being able to be this holy priesthood this sacred kingdom that God wants us to be and I was trying to exegete the text I noticed something quite phenomenal that the way that the author of Peter builds this argument is very specific the second half of 1st Peter if you observe is all about Christian ethics it's about what you should do then well you should do this you should treat your wife and husband this way you should treat the authorities this way you should then act godly in such and such and such a way but the first part he makes an argument that moves forward back and forth between what it means to be

God's people who is God and more over who is God in Jesus and he concludes this argument with the part when he says you are holy priesthood I noticed that his argument is basically this he he uses many artifacts to get there because the argument is basically this he says look when he used for example the image of the you are house of God building blocks of God put on the corners stone that is Jesus I don't know if you remember this passage basically what it says is that you serve and you are both and you belong to God the God that revealed himself in Jesus Christ because of this God and whom he is you are made holy priesthood you are made sacred kingdom and because of this

[40 : 36] God because this God made you who you are you must then behave in such a way and I went back to see where this quote comes from and comes from the Old Testament more specifically Exodus and it's quite before the starting of the Decalogue in chapter 19 and we focus so much on the Decalogue Decalogue is such an important part of our faith right and for the Jewish faith to a given extent and it's quite striking for me that how the Decalogue began is like this God come to Israel in the desert and say hear oh Israel I am the Lord I am the Lord who took you out of Egypt and brought you here and taking you to a land that's a good land for you I will make you holy priesthood and sacred kingdom for me therefore here are my rules basically notes that every piece of

Christian ethics I spent some time thinking about how the prophets work how the later prophets the early prophets work all of them are rooted the ethics they propose how the behavior the behavioral attitudes we must have are not rooted in an ideal of what is good it's rooted in who God is ultimately our behavior our lives how we live should be totally shaped by who God is as he revealed himself in Jesus Christ and this enterprise of understanding first Peter that trickle down in all these complex sets of movements and that's why I insisted on calling it a theological model I started calling it the biblical model but then it would be stretching too far and

I said let's call it a theological model thank you so much for the opportunity you gave me to bring this model here I will then hear your comments and questions regarding this model and I hope you enjoyed at least a little bit my development of such a complex correlation thank you yeah I've sort of thought at least generally along those lines myself in other words theology philosophy and ethics do not have an independent existence theology philosophy and as that basis on the one hand the ultimate determinant of our philosophy and theology is what we do and call right especially in the area of sexual morals

I can see when I was an older child and slid into unbelief I can see wrong behavior nothing very serious but nonetheless the ultimate source of it at the same time we tend to do what we believe to look at say behaviors in the past that make us go what we can at least be more understanding if you understand what people thought yeah for me one of the most helpful self reflective pieces I got from this is not what we think it's what we do I think that I could I talk about loving my neighbor love God and serving God but how much time do I actually spend doing it and that I always see what you think is coming down to what you do but I believe I'm thinking more what I do actually dictates what I really think it's very helpful if I may comment on that it's it's a very dangerous too as I come to think about how much

I can analyze myself using this model right and I always think if the way I'm living is actually the God reflecting the God I profess to believe or if the way I'm living is really shaped by my perception of God how I perceive God I perceive God as a God who loves everyone equally and saved me so I could so I was taken to do the good works that he prepared before time so yeah I understand you and I quite feel the same way wonderful talk I thought it was fascinating I say that because everybody in the room knows I'm math phobic anyway I find it fascinating because you're talking about the individual working in terms of what we think what we do and

[46 : 15] I was thinking about the body of Christ there were all different elements of the body of Christ and I was called to different walks within the body of Christ and I was thinking about okay you're called to this walk you're supposed to be doing this and when you are in your groove when you are doing what pleases God and you know it that relationship your personal relationship with the Christ is such a blessing that you know oh okay I'm I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing and it's pleasing to the father and that's a blessing and and then you also conversely you know when you're out of here I guess it's practice you know you're you're off that groove and and it's like and feedback on that too but that feedback is pushing against the greater part of the model which fascinates me because it's like individual but it's also totality it's absolutely fascinating thank you it's not a bad way you do it because it's taking something apart and just putting it in different sections and sometimes it's just let's see what's going on here so

I work with numbers and stuff you seem like a really emotional guy like Rodrigo that's from the Brazilian heritage quite hard to be a Brazilian without being quite passionate about whatever you're doing but thank you I'm interested in having you explore a little bit the difference between belief influencing behavior and behavior influencing belief the reason why I'm asking this is that I was certainly raised in a church that said when you believe that Jesus is your savior you will want to please him by the things that you do in other words we believe this and we will practice and deal with life this way but I had two experiences which made me think about things the other way not that I'm personally wedded to this but I want to toss it out for your comment one was reading a book about a Jewish rabbi

I wish I could remember the name of this I'm sorry I can't who was very very serious about his faith until he lost his son to an illness in early childhood and he lost his faith along with that and the congregation did not expel him or anything like that the wise man in his congregation felt supportive of you know let's get him back on track here and one of the things they told him was first we do then we will come to believe and you can keep doing this and it will restore your faith interesting idea the next experience I had was working for many years in a catholic hospital where a lot of doing without necessarily grasping the reality of the theology was part of training the kids in school where religion was taught no Sunday school it was taught in school and they learned a certain amount of this and then they had first communion and then they learned some more and then they were confirmed and then many of them stopped learning at that point but it was about doing and coming to believe through doing do you have a comment about which is a more effective way to do it how it influences our teaching of theology etc yes thank you my first instinct in this specific topic is that the knowing

God right the theology has a heavier effect than the practices that's why the scriptures are so emphatic in terms of we must know God we must be filled with the knowledge of God you must be Paul prayed quite often that the churches may be filled with knowledge of the will of God and of God himself however I did not present that like this because my scientific basic do not allow me to present something without having data so I had to do a very long extensive research to say this one is heavier than this one however although I have this impression that this one is heavier it's also true that we do way more than we think in terms of how we live so if you would add all our practices even if

I'm right and our practices have a smaller impact than our perception of God directly have an impact is it it's true that this adding up probably swings the pendulum back with way more strength than just knowing up so what I think of what your comment is it is true that practice or practices is a huge thing in terms of how we come to know God and I particularly don't think it's possible for us to come to know God without doing anything in that direction right yeah that that is it clear enough for you or good enough for you in my comment sorry well

[52 : 27] I'd like to hear a little bit more about that I feel like saying more I've got an idea and I don't know if this helps I use this with myself I really love this concept and I think I'm going to be reflecting on it this week but I use this example with my students a lot in teaching writing and I say writing is like riding a bicycle you have to understand the theoretical of it but you're never going to be able to ride a bicycle just by reading about it you have to know the principles but you have to apply the principles to actually know it and so I don't know so maybe that's part of it you have to have that love of God to know the will of God but you actually have to do the will of God to be able to do the will of God and then maybe you get a better understanding of it you know it theoretically but then you hit a rock in the road and you realize hmm okay this is how I counterbalance this is how I really have faith this is how I get down on my knees when I'm in a difficult situation

I don't know I think what we're trying to get at is that we can't keep our knowledge of God to ourselves we have to take it out into community and let it work commenting further what you said I'm using the model to do it I said that perception is a synthesis of information right and the truth is that whenever you're doing things you're adding information all the time the way you feel the way you touch your sensations your emotions are all bits and pieces of information right and this information is eventually going to add up to your perceptions and synthesize it it's true that we can only know God to a given extent by it's a tricky word to say with experiencing God in community experiencing God in prayer experiencing God in reading the scriptures but you can only have this information to work with if you are doing these things right if you're not reading your

Bible regularly faithfully even though it may seem terribly dry sometimes especially if you're in Leviticus for over two weeks and the third time you're reading how the tabernacle is done if you're not doing that faithfully you are not adding this information that must be synthesized right and yes preaching may be something that adds information directly towards its theological right but preaching for example listening to a preaching is a very small bit of our lives right it's too small piece of information to shape our whole life in reality right to be synthesizing something useful so this is where I think practice is quite essential and I agree with you if we do not say I need to pray I need to pray because I understand that God wants me to have a conversation relationship with him and if you don't take it and I will pray every day or at least this much every week you don't start doing it you won't have the information or the experience of what prayer really is and this will not shape you if you say oh I need to have a godly life and show mercy to my neighbor but if you just sit here and have a theoretical experience about what it is to help my neighbor and if you don't stand up and go to your neighbor and actually help him in whichever gifts

God gives you for that and whichever opportunities God gives you for that you will never know and have information to synthesize right about what it is helping what helping your neighbor looks like right if you don't go and do your catechesis if you don't go and come to communion if you don't go and have a fellowship experience you don't have information to synthesize anything that's why just the theoretical experience just sitting and talking about God never was God's idea of Christian life and doesn't work at all you can argue that lots of people lose their faiths in theological schools maybe because they spend so much time thinking about God that they don't have time to really experience God in any real way so the information becomes too abstract and too far away and as I said the amount of input I have just of my physical experiences is way more than the amount of time I can stop stop thinking theoretically about God so if my praxis does not allow me to have information that shapes a

God that that helps me to perceive God as God has revealed himself in scriptures and in Christ I cannot come to this idea just by myself we don't create knowledge out of nowhere we need to receive information first and then perceive this information so it's impossible to know God without practicing godly work it's a two way street the two way street and as you know God more it reshapes your practices this dialectic effect that Foster and Thio talk about Marcus I'm wondering about the importance of observation you know one of the advent of science was somebody said wait a minute I'm going to watch I'm going to really watch and see what happens I think that's a very important part of science and certainly social science and some of the early psychologists psychiatrists they actually observed their patients and so on and today in medical or psychiatry there's less of that more saying okay tell me how many incidents of this did you have or that you had and there's less observation taking place in some areas of science and medicine on the part of our faith and philosophy you know where does observation play a role and you know that's not something I it's always a challenge for example too eight year old boys wrestling in the grass people can have three people can be observing and have three different perceptions oh they're fighting oh they're you know they're having fun you know they can be really different perceptions about that you know so you know here you've got knowledge equals information plus perception plus and you've got some dot dot dots is observation one of them and how anyway just your comments about observation

[59 : 56] I myself would not put observation as a form of how knowledge presents itself I would understand it as a form of assessing knowledge right it's very curious that the postmodern world the world we live in is very little observation oriented we are not encouraged to observe anything I would observe as a intensive effort of an individual to access a piece of information right when you're observing something you're kind of shutting down other entrances of information and focusing all your capacities on that specific object or phenomenon like people wrestling kids wrestling in the grass right it's kind of a discipline I would say it's a discipline very well used by the modern sciences most of the all the empirical science are based on observation in that matter and created well a lot of the techniques and technologies we have today it's the same thing for example if you take to Christian practice it's different for you to take your bible open it and read it through and you observe what the words are saying what's happening in the context what is

God how God is acting how Jesus is acting doing a very simple exegesis in that way right it's a form of accessing what the bible says I had an author saying once that I was quite phenomenal people pray but after people pray people don't try to observe if God is answering or not to just pray just say oh I prayed about it and they go on they don't try to observe wait is God answering me somehow is God answering me through a friend who came to me is God answering me through a situation that changed it after praying is God answering me through the words that's being spoken in the service that day you know we don't stop really to observe and then we lose a lot of information on that direction but yeah you're totally right observation is a huge part of science and I think should be a huge part of our lives as well if we start more time observing I think we would be able to be more effective and do less more efficiently rather than do a lot of things hoping that one of them will work things like

I just want to sum up by thanking you again for such an amazing and provocative and insightful topic I think we will all go home and start thinking about what we say versus what we do and I'm actually very also the idea of looking at the Bible and how you brought in the arguments made you know I think often we read and we read line by line instead of saying what you know what is the picture how do these pieces how does this argument pull together and what are the implications for me that was really really helpful so can't believe it's a first talk kudos to you and thank you so much