



**Mike Cosper** is the executive director of Harbor Media, a non-profit media company serving Christians in a post-Christian world. Prior to that, he served for sixteen years as a pastor at Sojourn Community Church in Louisville, Kentucky. He is the author of *The Stories We Tell: How TV and Movies Long for and Echo the Truth* and *Rhythms of Grace: How the Church's Worship Tells the Story of the Gospel*. He lives in Louisville, Kentucky, with his wife, Sarah, and their two daughters.

## Stale Faith, Rationalism, and Miracles

*Enchantment is easy when we're young. But as time goes on, disillusionment crowds in through the news, hardships, and everyday life. It becomes easier to rely on the concrete and rational. In his latest book, Recapturing the Wonder, Mike Cosper invites Christians to practice the spiritual disciplines in hopes of reshaping the way they see the world and bringing that sense of wonderment back.*

### **What made you want to write a book centered on the topic of miracles and spiritual formation?**

**Mike Cosper:** I wanted to try to understand what makes spiritual formation so difficult. How have we already been shaped by the culture around us in ways that hinder our participation in the spiritual life? How have we been primed to resist belief? And then, how can spiritual disciplines and habits reorient us to another way of seeing and experiencing the world?

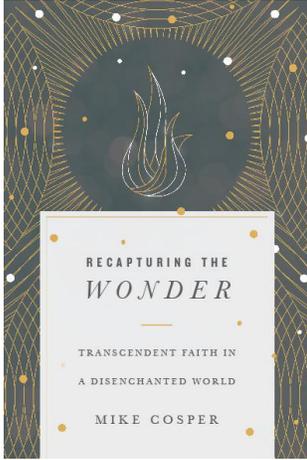
### **Why is disenchantment key to understanding the need for spiritual disciplines? Why is disenchantment problematic for our faith?**

**Cosper:** My life as a Christian had left me with a certain amount of fluency with faith: I could keep up in conversations about theology, the history of the Bible, the world of the first century, and the history of the church. I could talk a bit about apologetics and worldview. And I could talk a good bit about worship and liturgy in the church. But . . . I couldn't help but feel the gap between knowing and know-how, between what I knew I could *say* about my faith and what I could *do* with it. At times, my faith felt like a boxed-in corner of my life, separate and distinct from most of it. Strangely, this isn't because of lack of events in my life that could be called miraculous. . . . But these, too, felt somehow boxed-in, an island I occasionally took a ferry to, rather than the mainland of my everyday experience. Even the little things that make up "Christian life" — going to church, reading the Bible, and so on — felt tacked on and disconnected from the rest of my life.

Much of this book is an attempt to understand why such a gap exists and what we might do about it. It's an attempt to sketch out the spiritual landscape of an age that has been called a "secular age," an "age of anxiety," and a "culture of narcissism," and an effort at finding a path into a different way of life.

### **Who do you think needs to read this book?**

**Cosper:** I think I'm speaking to my generation and younger: people who've been Christians for a while and are experiencing the frustrations of a stagnant faith and resistance to prayer and spiritual practices, and who find themselves deeply unsatisfied with our culture of disenchantment.



*Recapturing the Wonder:  
Transcendent Faith in a  
Disenchanted World*

**Available August 22, 2017**

\$17, 180 pages, paperback

978-0-8308-4506-4

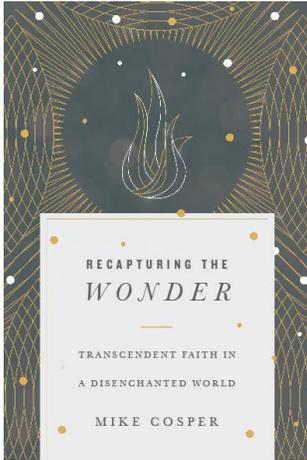
“*Recapturing the Wonder* is a winsome wake-up call, calling us back to ourselves and back to God. It’s conversational and straightforward, full of heart and authenticity. Through simple spiritual practices freshly applied, Cosper invites us to practice the integration of grace against the disconnect of this modern life.”

— **Sandra McCracken**, singer  
and songwriter

**What are the main takeaways you want readers to have when they close this book?**

**Cosper:**

- Your experience of doubt and disbelief is – at least in part – a product of the culture you’re immersed in and not a sign of weakness. In other words, if belief is difficult, that’s okay; you’re normal.
- The spiritual disciplines are a pathway to undoing some of our culture’s formative work, providing a new way to see and experience the world.
- Because of the gospel we can understand the spiritual disciplines as invitations, not obligations, as ways of being with God, not appeasing him.
- We need a transformed way of life, not just a few practices sprinkled into an otherwise disenchanted life.
- There is still room in our world for wonder, mystery, and the transcendent.



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## The Glowing-Cross Non-Miracle

I stumbled upon my disenchantment a few years ago after attending a dedication service at my parents' church. The new, eighty-million-dollar facility was roughly the size of the Death Star, with a parking lot that rivaled Six Flags in pure concrete acreage. There were more volunteers directing traffic and opening doors than most churches have for attendees.

During the service, a "special music" number was sung by an unironically mustachioed man in a suit, a contemporary Christian power ballad with swooning strings and multiple key changes. About midway through the song, a large cross on the back wall began to glow.

To be clear: when I say large, I mean *large*. The eight-thousand seat auditorium has two balconies, and the distance from the stage to the catwalk above it is probably four stories. The cross spanned most of that height, a simple brown cross on a beige wall. At first, the glow was subtle—a pale fluorescence around the edges that one might have dismissed as a weird reflection. But it soon became clear that there was some serious wattage behind it. As the mustachioed man stairstepped keys from the bridge to the final chorus, the light grew brighter and brighter—like, migraine-inducing bright—casting long, stark shadows on the stage.

The song ended and the crowd roared with applause, many wiping tears on their arms as they leapt to their feet and clapped. Eventually, the glow diminished and the house lights came up and the service moved along. All the lights retained a standard, this-worldly brightness for the remainder of the service.

At lunch afterward, between bites of chain-restaurant lasagna, my dad asked, "What did you think?"

"What do you mean?" I said.

"The cross . . . what did you think? It was pretty bright, right?"

I nodded.

"Do you think," he hesitated, and then said in a lower voice, "Do you think it was *real*?"

I pushed a forkful of overcooked noodles through a grey puddle of alfredo sauce that I regretted ordering. Then I searched his face.

"What do you mean?" I repeated.

"The light," Dad said. "It was awfully bright."

"Do you mean, like, was it a miracle?" I asked.



## BOOK EXCERPT

*“The word wonderful is a cliché these days, meaning simply ‘very good.’ This book, though, reclaims what it means to be wonder-full. Mike Cospers, one of the keenest gospel Christian analysts of culture alive today, shows us in this book why our world has become so disenchanted and charts us back to the joy of awe. This is an awe-full and wonder-full book, in the right meaning of both of those words.”*

—Russell Moore, president,  
Ethics and Religious Liberty  
Commission of the Southern  
Baptist Convention

Dad leaned back. “I mean, it probably wasn’t,” he said. He scooped up a slab of lasagna, grinned, and said, “Right?”

My dad’s a civil engineer. When I was a kid, he designed airport runways. He could bore you senseless talking about the different load-bearing capacities of concrete, their response to heat and pressure, which one you’d want to pour in your basement and which is good for dropping a 747 out of the sky onto.

He’s highly rational, and though he takes his faith seriously, he’s not the type of person who would send cash to televangelists for prayer towels or get in line to be slain by the Spirit. I have seen him tear up once or twice in a church service, but to be fair, I’d guess he’s also cried at more than one Pixar movie. He definitely got misty during the last episode of ALF. There’s a big difference between being sentimental and superstitious, and yet, here he was, raising the possibility that the glow behind a cross in a multi-million-dollar facility with state-of-the-art audio, video, and lighting was some kind of miracle.

At the time, Dad’s question seemed so odd, so out-of-character. But this isn’t my Dad’s story; it’s mine. It’s the story of how I stumbled upon my own disenchantment. Because what surprised me in retrospect was not that Dad raised the possibility of a miracle in a modern, industrial megachurch service, it was the utter impossibility of such a thing in my mind. Is it stranger to want to read a miracle into a stage effect, or to be a Christian whose gut-level reaction is “That’s ridiculous”?

My guess is that most would react as I did: surprised and cynical. There are rational reasons for being cynical about this particular miracle, but it didn’t take any thought or reasoning for me (or, in all likelihood, for you) to be skeptical. It was my instinct, my gut reaction. I didn’t have to think first and stitch together my reasons for believing the light was ordinary. I *felt* that it was impossible for it to be supernatural, and then found evidence to support my suspicions.

What I stumbled upon, then, was a deeply ingrained posture, a fully-formed attitude toward the world that is suspicious not only of well-timed miracles in the middle of a big production number, but is actually suspicious of any kind of religious experience.

I react to the suggestion of a miracle – or for that matter, any thoughts about God, the spiritual, or the transcendent – with skepticism and cynicism. It is my default setting. I am programmed to expect that the world is what I can see, touch, and measure, and any thought or idea that runs against that expectation is met with resistance. Programming is actually a great way to think about it. I have learned to see the world this way, and I don’t have to think about it anymore.

— Taken from chapter one, “Discovering Our Disenchantment”