

**I. Observations of Responses in our Current Season**

- A. The unique events and pressures of these past few months have brought all kinds of responses within the body of Christ. More times than not the truth of who we really are and how we really feel comes out of us in difficult seasons. Knowing this, I have endeavored to observe both my own responses and the responses of the Body of Christ in general to discern where we truly are in our relationship with Jesus.
- B. Love of God Defined – The word of God defines love as the holy nature and characteristics of the person of God, or in other words, God’s heart. In this way, God is defined as love. Therefore, love is actually not found in actions or speech but rather the condition of the heart behind the actions or speech. (Ex. 34:6-7; 1 Cor. 13:4-7; Gal. 5:22-23)
1. Jesus spoke many times about the value in assessing where our own hearts are based upon the measure of the love of God that flows out of us in our speech and activity in various seasons. (Matt. 7:15-20, 9:4, 12:25, 15:18-20)
- C. Both in my own response, and in the responses of other believers, through these past few months I have observed a tenacious desire to both seek and communicate truth. This seeking and communication of truth manifested itself in myriads of social media posts, internet searches, YouTube videos, phone and zoom conversations. All these activities seemed to have one common goal: “what is the truth of all this?” and “how should we respond to it?” Let me be clear, this is not a bad thing if it's done in and through love, as defined above.
1. The pinnacle question for me and for you in this season is this: **What manifestation of the heart of God did we see in ourselves and in others as truth was pursued and communicated in this season?** Was it different than that of the non-believer, was it seasoned and infused by the tangible love of God? Was your heart unoffended, merciful, and gracious in this season or was it at enmity with the love of God by being boastful, self-seeking, fearful, and proud?

*And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, **but have not love, I am nothing.** (1 Cor. 13:2)*

2. I was personally very concerned at the minimal level of the fruits (love) of the Spirit of God that was coming out of me, and the body of Christ at large, in this season. In light of this, I have become painfully aware of the level of religion versus relationship that I have with Jesus. I find myself needing to go back to the intentionality of beholding Jesus, rather than simply knowing the truth about Him, so that greater levels of love and Godliness can be formed in me.

## II. Pursuing the Beauty of His Holiness

- A. The Need and Way of and for Transformation – God has ordained that humanity is not only saved through beholding His beauty, but then molded into His image, by the same. Both the entry of salvation and the way forward to transformation is found through perceiving and beholding His beauty. (Eph. 3:16-19)
  1. When we find ourselves lacking in the love of God to Him and from Him we must understand that the way forward is not through the setting of the mind to change our behavior. This simply leads us into hypocrisy and dead religion. We must give ourselves to the process of being transformed by beholding His love, or more scripturally put, “the beauty of His holiness”.
- B. The Beautiful One – When the scriptures speak of the beauty of God, it is not talking about beauty that is perceived through the physical eye, but rather it is talking about both the nature and character of God and the activity that flows from His nature and character. In other words, the knowledge and revelation of God is His beauty. Seeing this beauty is what causes love and worship to abound to Him from humanity. (Ps. 29:2; 50:1-6; 96:1-10, Ps. 27:4; Lk 10:42)
- C. Fashioned and Created in His Image – What sets apart humanity from all the rest of the created order is that we have been fashioned by God to be able to be fascinated by His beauty and relate to Him in it. God’s desire for us to see and understand His beauty was so important to Him that He created us to experience life to the fullest only when we are living lifestyles of perceiving it. Therefore, the activity of beholding Jesus is not there simply to cause you to be a better Christian; it is what you were made for. (Gen. 1-3; John 17:1-3, 22-26; Eph. 4:11-13)

**III. Beholding Jesus “Going beyond knowing Truth”**

A. Truth and Knowledge of who God is and what He is doing is Essential but it in and of itself is not love--This knowledge does not produce love unless it is beheld and touches and changes the heart. We must understand what beholding the beauty of God actually looks like and how to give ourselves to it.

B. Devoted Christians with Dull Hearts – It is very common to believe that simply because you are in certain environments to take part in spiritual practices that you are growing in love and beholding God. Many wrongly assume that the following list of edifying christian activities are in and of themselves beholding God’s beauty. All of these things are only encounters with beauty. If you do not go through the process of beholding that beauty, your heart will remain unchanged by the encounter. (Col. 2:23; 1 Tim. 3:2-7)

1. Power Encounters
2. Anointed Worship
3. Ministry Environments
4. Anointed Messaging
5. Bible Study
6. Godly Works
7. Intense Intercession
8. High Levels of Spiritual Gifting
9. Daily Christian Disciplines
10. Vibrant Community
11. History in God

C. Beholding Unto Becoming – Actual deep relational love for God and the transformation of the heart in that love only happens through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit (God’s part) and the relational cycle of intimacy (our part). We can’t do God’s part and He won’t do our part. (2 Cor. 3:17-18; Col. 3:3-10; 1 Pet. 2-8)

1. God’s Part – The scriptures abound in exhortations that without the work of the Spirit revealing God’s beauty to us supernaturally, our hearts are not transformed by it. In other words, it’s not enough to simply know in our head what the bible says or hear about God and retain it in our minds. The Holy Spirit supernaturally works to cause the revelation of God to be understood to the level that it marks and effectively changes our hearts. (John 15:26, 16:13-14)

2. Our Part – Participation in the Intimacy Cycle – We position ourselves to behold Jesus through the intentionality of seeking God through the relational cycle of intimacy and asking for the Holy Spirit to help us.

*“You search the scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.....But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you.” (John 5:39-42)*

- a. Seeking Encounter - Intentional pursuit of intimate knowledge and the finding of it. This is where many people stop in this cycle of intimacy with God, but we must go on to the next step in order for real love to exist in us. (Ps. 24:1-6, 27:8)
- b. Moving Knowledge from the Head to the Heart – Taking the time and intentionality to meditate or contemplate the implications of the knowledge that you have found. This is what it means to “Behold.” (Ps. 119:15,48,78, 77:12; 145:5; Lk 10:39-42)
- c. Overflow – Our emotions get stirred and the overflow is love, joy, and pleasure that causes us to then seek another encounter. (Ps. 16:11, 36:7-10; Eph. 3:19)

*“If the believer would enter in to a better, deeper, fuller knowledge of God he must prayerfully study the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the scriptures. Let this be made our chief business, our great delight, to reverently scrutinize and meditate upon the person of our Divine Savior. It is then, and only then, shall we ourselves increase in the knowledge of God and have the “light of the glory of God” be seen in us and through us.” - AW Pink*