

I. Introduction: There is More

- A. Last week Dustin set a vision for living wholeheartedly out of a hunger to encounter more of God. We can do this by living filled with the Holy Spirit. This week we want to talk about embracing a philosophy, lifestyle, and corporate culture of 'discipleship that begins with beholding'. Let's dive in and go deep!
- B. Credit: Much of the content of the following notes are derived from *Discipleship Begins with Beholding* by Samuel Whitefield.

II. Why We Behold, and Why we Don't

- A. 1 Cor 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.
 - 1. "Beholding beauty produces fascination, and fascination is the best way to transform a person." (Discipleship Begins with Beholding, pg. 8)
- B. "If people embrace certain rhythms and engage in certain disciplines *but are not fascinated*, then they are not disciplined." (pg. 9)
 - 1. Example: If a person has never engaged in running, then having a coach begin to introduce them to the discipline of running can serve in helping them grow in the enjoyment and challenge of running.
 - 2. Discipleship is ultimately about conformity to the image of another. You won't conform to what you don't behold, and you won't gaze intently at something that doesn't capture and fascinate your imagination. **This is how God created us, to behold His beauty and become like Him.**
- C. Practical Barriers to Beholding:
 - 1. We don't understand *how* to behold individually, and subsequently have neglected it corporately.
 - 2. We don't prioritize it in how we organize our time and energy.
 - 3. We don't value the transformational power of beholding (most important deficiency).
- D. In the following teaching, I will attempt to address each of these barriers, particularly the third. We will do this by setting a high vision for the transformational power of beholding.

III. Overview: How We Behold

- A. I want to begin by outlining some practical ways to engage with beholding to give us some handles. I encourage you all to take part in some of our Wednesday classes, our internships, or to read *Discipleship Begins with Beholding*, as a means of growing in the practicals of beholding as a lifestyle.
- B. Different practices will be emphasized to us in different seasons, as the Holy Spirit leads us on a journey of beholding and becoming.
- C. If you do the following consistently over time individually *and* in community, with a commitment to being transformed, you *will* behold Jesus and become like Him. (DBWB pg. 182)
 - 1. Become a student of the beauty of Jesus.
 - 2. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus.
 - 3. Meditate on the Word of God, seeking the knowledge of God.
 - 4. Sing the Word of God.
 - 5. Value God's people and live in community with other believers.
 - 6. Keep a regular rhythm of prayer.
 - 7. Pursue a fasted lifestyle and a rhythm of fasting.
- D. Prioritizing a Lifestyle of Beholding
 - 1. "Many people are trying to add God to their already busy lives, but humans have limited capacity. If you want to behold God more than you do now, you will probably need to make changes and *let some things go*" (DBWB pg. 136).
 - 2. "When we want deep relationship with another person, it requires us to let other relationships and other activities go so we can prioritize the person we want a relationship with. God is the same way" (DBWB pg. 136).
 - 3. "Affluent societies lie to us and say we can 'have it all,' but it is simply not true. **You have to decide what you want** and be content with letting the rest go" (DBWB pg. 136).
- E. Creating a Corporate Culture of Beholding
 - 1. "People are most transformed by their rhythm of life and their community. For example, an infant learns how to become a person by experiencing their community and imitating it. As they behold, they are transformed. This is the fundamental human method of development, and it extends to spiritual life as well" (DBWB pg 191).

2. “People are not taught culture; they learn it by being immersed in it. If you grow up in a certain culture, you reflect that culture in every area of your life. You will find certain things funny, adopt certain mannerisms, and form certain values, not because you were taught, but because you were immersed in a culture” (DBWB pg 191).
3. “Information is not enough to transform people. Transformation requires a context. That context is the church. It is the place where biblical culture is demonstrated. When we are immersed in that culture, we are transformed, and so biblical discipleship must take place in a community” (DBWB pg 191).
4. We must engage together in corporate practices of beholding through immersive teaching environments, small groups and house churches, serving alongside one another, and worshipping and meditating on the beauty of the Lord together. This will allow our personal and corporate practices to align with the biblical value of beholding.

IV. The Eternal Priestly Calling to Behold

- A. The angels and saints of heaven are eternally beholding and responding in worship, crying out “Holy” in ecstasy (i.e. other than) in response to what they see. The elders of heaven and angels around the throne are constantly beholding, and responding in worship to what they see. Beholding is part of **your** eternal priestly calling as well.
 1. Revelation 4: **8** *The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!”* **9** Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, **10** the **twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying** **11** “Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things; by Your will they exist and came to be.”
- B. Our priestly worship does not happen apart from it being an authentic response to encountering the beauty and goodness of a transcendent and Holy God. God is Light, Glory, and Holiness beyond what we can imagine! We are made to proclaim His praises, and the elders of heaven that represent humanity before God’s throne (with prayer and worship) do exactly that.
 1. 1 Peter 2:9 But you *are* a chosen generation, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, His own special people, that **you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;**

2. Revelation 5:8 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders **fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.** 9 And they sang a new song, saying: **“You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain,** And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, **10 And have made us kings and priests to our God;** And [f]we shall reign on the earth.”
 3. Revelation 1:5 To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, **6 and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever.** Amen.
 - a) Note that John highlights our eternal priestly identity in the introduction of the Book of Revelation. A good writer always foreshadows the most important points in an introduction.
 - C. We are created to *be* the place of worship: a house of prayer, a priestly people, a living sacrifice. All that was in the temple has now been placed within the body of believers.
 1. 1 Peter 2:5 you also, as living stones, are **being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**
 - D. This same calling is ours *in this life* and in eternity. We will never stop beholding, gazing, and being fascinated by His beauty. There are three primary eternal identities that mirror how God will forever relate to us as Father, Husband, and Eternal God. We are going to be His children, Jesus’ Bride, and His priests.
 1. Rev 21:2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, **prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.** 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! **God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.** 4 ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’[b] or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” 5 He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” ...7 Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and **I will be their God and they will be my children.**
 - E. Adam was the first priest charged with keeping the garden as a place of encounter with God, in the eternal age all of creation will be the temple of God. The garden was the original place of God’s dwelling on the earth with man. It was in the garden that Adam and Eve “heard the sound of the LORD God walking...” (Gen. 3:8).
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1. G. K. Beale comments: “The same Hebrew verbal form (stem) *mithallek*...used for God’s ‘walking back and forth’ in the Garden (Gen. 3:8), also describes God’s presence in the tabernacle (Lev. 26:12; Deut. 23:14[15]; 2 Sam. 7:6-7). God’s walking in the garden indicates His special presence among men. In this sense, the garden of Eden was a temple, a special dwelling place of God on earth among men. The garden of Eden was the earth’s first sanctuary.”

 2. Genesis 2:15 Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. Genesis 2:15 says God placed Adam in the Garden ‘to cultivate (i.e., work] it and to keep it.’ The two Hebrew words for ‘cultivate and keep’ are usually translated ‘serve and guard [or keep]’ elsewhere in the Old Testament. It is true that the Hebrew word usually translated ‘cultivate’ can refer to an agricultural task when used by itself... When, however, these two words... occur together in the Old Testament..., they refer either to Israelites ‘serving’ God and ‘guarding [keeping]’ God’s word...or to priests who ‘keep’ the ‘service’ (or ‘charge’) of the tabernacle (see Num. 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6; 1 Chr. 23:32; Ezek. 44:14).¹
- F. In the next age, our eternal dwelling will be saturated with the light of God’s glory, and we will serve God as priests. We will see His face and be intimately acquainted with Him as it was always intended to be.
1. Revelation 21:**22** I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. **23** The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, **for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp...**
Revelation 22:3 No longer will there be any curse. **The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.**
- G. The Aaronic blessing God commanded Moses to give to the priests in Numbers 6 was all about seeing the face of God and having His name upon them. This was God’s desire when he instituted the priesthood and one He will ultimately have fully satisfied in us! This is what God longs for, that we would live beholding Him intimately.
1. Numbers 6:22 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: **23** “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, ‘This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: 24 “The Lord bless you and keep you; 25 **The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you;** 26 **The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.**” ’ **27** “So they shall [p]ut My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.”

V. Where Beholding Begins: Christ, and Him Crucified

¹ <https://reformedbaptistfellowship.wordpress.com/2013/01/11/the-garden-of-eden-a-temple-and-adam-a-priest/>

- A. Media Moment: A brief video that demonstrates the humans capacity to worship.
- B. We are made to behold and worship our Creator, but instead fallen humanity beholds and worships creatures.
 - 1. Rom 1:22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. 24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and **worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.** Amen.
- C. “In many cases, we expect people to become like Jesus when He is not their central focus, but this will never work. This approach may produce people who keep some rules and behave well, but they cannot be discipled into the image of God unless they behold God in the person of Jesus. We must train people to become students of the beauty of Jesus through every means available to them. *All our ministry—teaching, preaching, singing, counseling, pastoring, meeting the needs of the poor—must lead people to behold Jesus*” (*Discipleship Begins With Beholding Pg. 140*).
- D. “Our hearts crave beauty, but the fallen human heart does not naturally find Jesus beautiful. God wants to make us like Jesus, but that is an image that most humans do not find beautiful...We need to seriously ask how much of the culture in our churches reflects Jesus’ beauty and how much of the culture in our churches continues to reflect human definitions of beauty and success” (DBWB pg. 141).
- E. “The evidence of this is in our images of Jesus. For example, in the Western world, images of Jesus look nothing like a first-century, Middle-Eastern Jew with “no beauty that we should desire Him.” Instead, we portray Jesus as a tall white man with blue eyes and strong Western features. This image is literally a Jesus in our own image with zero basis in historical or biblical reality. It is nothing more than a reflection of what we naturally find beautiful” (DBWB pg. 141).
- F. We were made to worship *someone* that has no worldly beauty to attract us (no money, intelligence, charisma, or good looks). Jesus was given “nothing beautiful or majesty about his appearance”, only a heavenly beauty that comes from God.
 - 1. Isa 53:2 My servant grew up in the LORD’s presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground. **There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him. 3 He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief.** We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care. (NLT)

- G. It is with Jesus that our beholding must begin, because He is the perfect image of the uncreated God. His beauty is of another order and must be perceived with the eyes of our heart. It is in Jesus that we behold the Glory of the Father.
1. John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and **we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father**, full of grace and truth. ... **16** And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. **17** For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. **18** No one has seen God at any time. **The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.**
 2. Colossians 1:15 The Son is **the image of the invisible God**, the firstborn over all creation.
 3. Heb 1:3 **The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God**, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven.
 4. **Eph 1:18 I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light** so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.
- H. Paul told the Corinthians, the expression of Christ crucified was the main focus of His ministry among them.
1. 1 Cor 2:2 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. **2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.**
- I. Not only is Jesus the clearest Revelation of the Father, but His suffering on the cross is the highest revelation of the beauty. **Christ's suffering and resurrection, is the most concentrated picture of who God is at His core.** As we begin to behold and be changed, this is where we must set our gaze.
- J. As Samuel Whitefield describes, "Jesus was crucified as a naked man because it was the first moment in all time when God was fully exposed so we could see what God is really like in the core of His being. When you look at the cross, you see God as He truly is *all the time*—you see what was hidden in the ages past. Before the cross, aspects of God's nature were hidden by His glory. On the cross, He was fully exposed for the first time in eternity" (DBWB pg. 140).
- K. It is extremely offensive and mysterious that God has hidden the highest revelation of His beauty, love, kindness, and mercy, in a grotesque event of suffering, but it is in the cross that we behold the depths of the love of God.

1. 1 Cor 1:23 **but we preach Christ crucified**: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,**24** but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. **25** Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.
 2. 1 John 3: 16 **This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us**. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.
 3. 1 John 4:8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because **God is love**. **9** In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. **10** In this is love, not that we have loved **God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins**. **11** Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.
- L. Jesus stripped naked on the cross, crowned with thorns, scourged, and crucified, was so horrific an event, that few of us have ever seen a fully accurate depiction of it in art, because the image of nudity, brutality, and humiliation would be too graphic. It is not beautiful to the human senses.
1. Isaiah 52:14 But many were amazed when they saw him. His face was so disfigured he seemed hardly human, and from his appearance, one would scarcely know he was a man. (NLT)
- M. Heaven worships the slain lamb. Jesus for eternity will bear the marks of His suffering in His resurrected body. When we shake hands with Jesus in Heaven, We will see the King of Glory still bears the marks of love. When we go to hug Him, we will feel the wounds in His side. But, you don't have to wait to behold the beauty of the Wounded One.
1. Revelation 5:6 And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain
 2. John 20:27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and **look at My hands**; and reach your hand *here*, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."