

Prayer for BFT and MHC sites during this season of transition.

- Thank God for every season. Each one has its purpose. → God use this season to grow the churches in BFT/MHC deeper, stronger, together.
- Grace on Trav & Beck's to grow in favor and stature.
- Grace and wisdom on Donnie and elders. H.S. led.

AMEN

GM // name // happy new year! [late]

If you have your bibles ... Song of songs 4.

If not ... read along with me on the screen.

Song of Songs 4:1-10

**1 Behold, you are beautiful, my love,
behold, you are beautiful!**

**Your eyes are doves
behind your veil.**

**Your hair is like a flock of goats
leaping down the slopes of Gilead.**

**2 Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes
that have come up from the washing,
all of which bear twins,**

and not one among them has lost its young.

**3 Your lips are like a scarlet thread,
and your mouth is lovely.**

**Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate
behind your veil.**

**4 Your neck is like the tower of David,
built in rows of stone;
on it hang a thousand shields,
all of them shields of warriors.**

**5 Your two breasts are like two fawns,
twins of a gazelle,
that graze among the lilies.**

**6 Until the day breathes
and the shadows flee,**

**I will go away to the mountain of myrrh
and the hill of frankincense.**

**7 You are altogether beautiful, my love;
there is no flaw in you.**

**8 Come with me from Lebanon, my bride;
come with me from Lebanon.**

**Depart from the peak of Amana,
from the peak of Senir and Hermon,
from the dens of lions,
from the mountains of leopards.**

**9 You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride;
you have captivated my heart with one glance of your
eyes,
with one jewel of your necklace.**

**10 How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride!
How much better is your love than wine,
and the fragrance of your oils than any spice!**

We are kicking off a sermon series that is seeking to answer
the question, “Who are we really?”

**And we are going to dig a little bit deeper than an
eHarmony profile.**

So, “Who are we really?”

Well we are many things ... but what comes out of us most
is worship ...

We all worship something.

Now, some of you might balk at this claim ... So let me try
to win you over.

Regardless of your religious persuasion, I think we would all
agree that “Love” is a big part of what it means to be a
human. Maybe the biggest thing.

We all want to love someone and be loved by someone.

And love is at the heart of worship.

B/C Worship is just an expression and extension of love.

To say it another way ...

We Worship What We Love

Think about the passage we just read...

Look at what love drove this guy to do...

He describes with detail the one he loves ... to a level of awkwardness ...

You don't get that detailed unless you've spent some time looking, studying, pondering, thinking.

You can tell this guy knew his girl.

And he describes her as she is ... not what he wanted her to be like.

This isn't like the movie "Weird Science" where some dorky teen is creating his dream girl ...

He is loving her just as she is.

He is enjoying every feature, every aspect.

The way she wears her hair ...

The way her mouth moves when she talks ...

The way she smells...

He has spent a lot of time drinking in her beauty.

That's what love does ... it enjoys who you are.

We all connect with that don't we?

If we are honest ... we'd all agree with the statement, "I want to be loved as I am."

Think about some of your most painful moments ... it's when people didn't do that.

Or when people wished we were like someone else.

MARRIAGE COUNSELING: Husband putting pics of other girls next to wife during intimacy.

When it comes to love, we want people not only to put up with who we are ... we want them to enjoy us for who we are.

You know what is interesting though...

That sentiment ... "Love me for who I am."

We are okay to apply that to everyone but God.

We don't love God for who he is...

Let me explain ...

We like aspects of God ...

We like that he is loving ... merciful ... gracious.

But maybe we don't like the sovereign part ... the part that says we don't get to do whatever we want.

Or maybe we dig the grace of God, but not the holiness.

Or we like that he forgives us, but not that he expects us to be forgiving.

So often we craft a God after our own desires like those teenagers in Weird Science.

The problem is that isn't really love ... and that isn't really worship ...

You can't just enjoy certain parts of God ...

You have to accept him as he is ...

The whole Bible is God revealing all that he is.

We don't get to reject Old Testament God b/c he seemed a little too harsh on sin.

As if God's been evolving into a better version of himself over time.

Worship stops and considers all that God is ...

Not WHO WE WANT HIM TO BE ... BUT WHO HE IS.

To worship Him means you absolutely love every part of his character, attributes, actions, commandments.

Psalm 63 is one of my favorites.

It connects me with the heart of someone who wants to see God for who he is.

Listen to it and let it teach us some tips on worship.

Psalm 63:1-6

**1 O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you;
my flesh faints for you,
as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.**

2

**So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,
beholding your power and glory.**

3

**Because your steadfast love is better than life,
my lips will praise you.**

4

**So I will bless you as long as I live;
in your name I will lift up my hands.**

5

**My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food,
and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips,**

6

**when I remember you upon my bed,
and meditate on you in the watches of the night;**

There is a hunger in this musician's soul.

And It's not for more cowbell.

He knows only one thing will satisfy ...

It's God ...

Not stuff from God ...

Just God ...

And so he did something about it...

He sought out God to BEHOLD him...

That word "BEHOLD" is a command to stop ... slow down
... take your time ... look intently and intensely.

That's worship.

It isn't rushed ... it isn't hurried ...

We stop ... we slow down ...

We ponder and consider who God is ...

We remember God as we lie down to sleep ...

We meditate on him "in the watches of the night" ... in the
early morning hours ... we awaken the dawn to be with
God.

What this Psalm describes isn't a moment of worship ...

But a lifestyle of worship.

A way to live where we are continually drinking in God's glory, greatness, and steadfast love ...

Or to put it another way ...

It's a life where God is put first and pursued most.

B/C ...

What We Worship Most Becomes Our Priority

You can tell what you worship by looking at where you budget energy, time and money.

Where does God measure up in the budget of your life?

When God brought his people out of Egypt he gave them the Law.

You know a big part of the Law was helping them budget their time and finances around worshipping God.

He gave them rhythms of worship ... he gave them expectations for how to worship ...

which required setting aside the B.C. version of money ... grain and animals.

Too often we get caught in the minute details and miss the big picture of what God was doing for Israel ...

He was showing his people what a life of worship looks like.

Here is a fun exercise for you to go do this afternoon.

Get a blank calendar and build out an ideal week.

Start by budgeting in rhythms of worship ...

Every day ... put in time to go and “behold God?”

Maybe that’s 5 minutes or 30 minutes in the morning or afternoon or evening?

Next, add in Community Group, and then Sunday gathering.

(Also, good rhythms of worship.)

If you’re married, consider sprinkling in a family devotion or two.

Then add the other important stuff of life.

Family time, rest, work, play, friends.

Worship is too important to not prioritize ...

And let’s be honest ... if we don’t schedule it in ... we usually neglect it.

We trade “beholding” God for “beholding” Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, NETFLIX/HULU, or Fortnite.

Recent stats are saying the average person “beholds” these to the tune of 5 hours a day...

So we can’t say we don’t have time ... we just aren’t prioritizing God.

And what you give most of your time to is what shapes you most...

& not in a small way ...

We Become What We Worship

This is not an overstatement.

All the time spent on Social Media, Podcasts, Netflix, News, YouTube ...

All of that is doing something to us ...

Ronald Rolheiser said this was back in 1999.

It’s a little long, but its worth it.

**Narcissism accounts for the our heartaches,
pragmatism for our headaches, and restlessness for
our insomnia. And constancy of all three together**

account for the fact that we are so habitually self-absorbed by heartaches, headaches, and greed for experience that we rarely find the time and space to be in touch with the deeper movements inside of and around us...

Thomas Merton once said that the biggest spiritual problem of our time is efficiency, work, pragmatism; by the time we keep the plant running there is little time and energy for anything else. Neil Postman suggests that, **as a culture, we are amusing ourselves to death**, that is, distracting ourselves into a bland, witless superficiality. Henri Nouwen has written eloquently on how **our greed for experience and the restlessness, hostility, and fantasy it generates, block solitude, hospitality, and prayer in our lives**. They are right.

What each of these authors, and countless others, are saying is that we, for every kind of reason, good and bad, are **distracting ourselves into spiritual oblivion**. It is not that we have anything against God, depth, and spirit, we would like these, it is just that **we are habitually too preoccupied** to have any of these show up on our radar screens. We are more busy than bad, more distracted than nonspiritual, and more interested in the movie theatre, the sports stadium, and the shopping mall and the fantasy life they produce in us than we are in church. **Pathological busyness, distraction, and restlessness are major blocks today within our spiritual lives.**"

What are we becoming?

Are we worshippers journeying deeper into the heart of God ... becoming like him?

Or are distracting ourselves into spiritual oblivion ... with lives marked by heartaches, headaches, and restlessness?

So how can we avoid this drift?

And for some the question is ... “How do we turn and come back?”

It's one Big step ... and it's not easy...

Song of Songs 4:16

**Awake, O north wind,
and come, O south wind!**

**Blow upon my garden,
let its spices flow.**

**Let my beloved come to his garden,
and eat its choicest fruits.**

The poetry here describes an attribute of love:
Surrender.

Surrender is the step toward starting a journey back into worshipping God.

And might I add ... surrender is every step that takes you deeper into the Father's heart.

B/C...

Worship Is An Act Of Total Surrender

In worship we give ourselves over to God.

Not in part but in whole.

In worship, we present our authentic self.

Not the curated, cool, have-it-all-together image we put out on Social Media.

I said this step was difficult ... b/c it is.

No one likes to be vulnerable and honest about their faults, failures, fears, shame, hurts, and pain.

We want to hide those areas away and lock them up.

I heard a guy describe it beautifully.

Our hearts (aka garden) are like a house with many rooms.

Often we invite God into the foyer ... maybe even the living room.

All those areas that are clean and tidy and presentable.

We ask ... “Do you like what you see?”

God is asking ... “Yes, but what about that room down the hall?”

“Nope ... not letting you in that one.”

Why do we do that?

Somewhere in our lives someone hurt us and we learned not to trust.

We carry father wounds, mother wounds, friend wounds, spouse wounds.

All of us have those rooms ... those hurt lockers ... that we keep locked up tight.

We don't trust anyone with them ... not even God.

But worship is an act of surrender ...

Which means it requires you to trust the one you worship ...

You can't worship without trust ...

What are those locked rooms you won't surrender to God?

What would it take for you to make a step forward in surrendering it to God?

You can't do that until you understand the Character and Nature of God.

And this brings us full circle to where we started ...

You won't trust God until you Behold Him and learn who he really is.

God Alone Is Worthy Of Our Worship Because He Alone Is Trustworthy

The verses we read at the beginning is a love poem that depicts Jesus' love for his church.

Let me take you through three verses:

Song of Songs 4:1

**Behold, you are beautiful, my love,
behold, you are beautiful!**

When God looks he "beholds".

He beholds you and me ...

Which means he knows us fully inside and out.

And what does he say ... “You are beautiful.”

If you’re like me, I hear that and think ... “Cool. God loves and accepts me.”

But I don’t really believe he means all of me.

Not those sinful thoughts... (locked up in a room).

Not the way I fail to love him and others.

Not the fears or shame I harbor ...

Of course he doesn’t love those parts ...

THEN I read this ...

Song of Songs 4:7

**You are altogether beautiful, my love;
there is no flaw in you.**

I struggle to believe that’s really what God thinks when he “beholds” me.

No flaw ... really?

I didn’t know God indulged in hyperbole.

But what if every word of that were true?

Well, the Gospel says it is ...

Jesus came and died for us so our sins could be washed away.

He made us a new creation ... with new hearts.

And it says we are united to Jesus ... we are “One” with him.

Which means when God “beholds” us ... he sees us like he sees Jesus.

We wouldn't have a problem with God the Father saying to Jesus, “You are altogether beautiful, my love. There is no flaw in you.”

We get that ... It's Jesus.

But that is the good news of the Gospel which invites us to a deeper level of trust and worship.

Anything God would say of Jesus is true for us too.

B/C salvation is unity with Jesus.

And if you can accept that then this next line will move your heart to want to respond in worship ...

Song of Songs 4:9

9 You have captivated my heart ...

**[again] you have captivated my heart with one glance
of your eyes,**

You have captivated God's heart.

Not b/c of what you've done ... b/c he is a good God ... full
of love, rich in mercy,

He was willing to do whatever it took to make you flawless.

Even death on a cross.

Our worship is a response to God's lavish love ...

When you realize how captivated he is with you ...you
become captivated with him in a whole new way.

And that verse becomes your worship back to God.

**9 You have captivated my heart ... you have captivated
my heart with one glance of your eyes...**

BAND COME UP

RESPONSE

NOT A CHRISTIAN:

- There is something better than the heartache,
headache, and restlessness of life ...
- But it requires you to Surrender ...
- Surrender to a God who is love ...

- Who came and died for you ...

CHRISTIANS:

- Continue to Surrender ...
- Open up more of yourself to God. Trust him to let him into those locked rooms.
- And make time to stop, slow down, behold this incredible God who loves you and whose heart is captivated by you.
- Don't let the vanities and pleasures of our culture distract you into spiritual oblivion.

COMMUNION:

Communion is an act of worship.

As we take communion ... we are remembering Jesus' death for us.

We are "beholding" God's grace, mercy, love, righteousness.

This bread we eat ... ponder it ... consider what it means that Jesus would be broken for your brokenness.

This cup we drink ... ponder it ... consider what it means that Jesus would shed his blood and die to cleanse and free you from sin.

Let's eat and drink together ... reflecting on the beauty and mystery and wonder of God's love.