



# Digging Deeper

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## An Invitation to Behold

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### **What does it mean to behold something?**

Sometimes on Saturday mornings our bedroom door cracks open and I see the shadowy outline of tousled hair and an oversized t-shirt sneak into our room. This small visitor crawls quietly between me and my husband, as the early morning light peaks over the window sill. Everything is quiet. A few more minutes of sleep will soon give way to the busyness of the day. But for now, we are content just to be with each other, pillow-creased faces and all.

Those are some of my favorite moments as a mother. When my kids just want to be wherever I am. No agenda. Nowhere to be. Just time and presence. I study their faces, I listen to their giggles, and I thank God for the gift of being their mother.

### **The Presence of God**

Compassionate is the first word the Lord uses to describe Himself to Moses in Exodus 34:6. This word is closely related to the Hebrew word for "womb" and conjures images of a mother with her vulnerable child. God's compassion for us could be compared to the way a mother feels when her child sneaks into the room at the dawn of a new day.

When the ancient Israelites were preparing to enter the Promised Land, God's presence descended on Mount Sinai. God was extending an invitation to meet with His people. (If you haven't read Exodus 32-34 lately, I highly recommend it!)

In Exodus 33, after the Israelites are discovered worshiping a golden calf at the foot of Mount Sinai, God tells Moses that He is going to send the Israelites into the Promised Land but He's not going to go with them. Moses tells God that if God isn't going, then he doesn't want to go either. Moses wanted to be wherever God was. And the way Moses saw it, if God's presence didn't go with them into the Promised Land then he didn't see the use in going at all.

Moses would rather stay in the wilderness with God than enter the Promised Land without Him.

"If your presence does not go," Moses responded to him, "don't make us go up from here. How will it be known that I and your people have found favor with you unless you go with us? I and your people will be distinguished by this from all the other people on the face of the earth." (Ex 33:15-16 CSB)

What makes the people of God distinct is the presence of God.



Moses is not content just to successfully enter the Promised Land. He wants to know the Living God. So, Moses makes a bold request (In other words, he cracks the bedroom door open) and he asks God to show him His glory. And God decides to honor his request. He tells Moses to return to Mount Sinai where God reveals His glory by revealing His character and nature.

"And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation." Exodus 34:6-7

And as Moses spends time with God on that mountain it literally changes his appearance. Moses doesn't realize what's happening, but when he comes down from that mountain everyone else certainly does. His face is radiant.

I did Glamour Shots when I was 11 years old. If you didn't have the pleasure of growing up in the 90's all you need to know is that this was a very cliché makeover and photoshoot experience. I had high hopes for my blue eye shadow and beauty pageant hair. But when I got the pictures back they were edited to look like some kind of heavenly light was emanating from my face. All you had to do was look at the pictures and you knew this wasn't the real me. Someone had worked really hard to make me look like someone else entirely.

But I don't think that was the case for Moses. In fact, I would argue that Moses would have looked more like himself after being in the presence of the God who created him, not less. As Moses was beholding the glory of God, he started to reflect the glory he beheld.

### **We become like what we behold.**

When we spend time in the presence of God, transformation, by the power of the Spirit, will happen. The theological term for this is theosis. In other words, we become like what we behold. And when we, like Moses, behold God's glory, character, and nature, we become like Him.

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 says, "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom. And we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."

But how do we behold Him when we don't have a mountain to climb? Here's what we do; we look at the face of Jesus. Hebrews 1:3 says that Jesus is the radiance of God's glory, the same glory that Moses beheld. The whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is about a God who desires to dwell with His people by inviting us into a life-giving relationship with Him through His Son.

### **Getting to Know Jesus**

If we want to know who God is, we have to get to know Jesus.

We get to know Him through time and presence.

1. We spend time with Jesus in His Word, prayer, and with His body (other believers).
2. And when we do, we determine to be fully present and fully aware of His presence (not distracted by a list of to-dos or notifications).

These practices take patience, so much patience.

But when we set aside time to meet with Him, He will meet with us. We just need time and presence. Study His Word, listen for His voice, and trust that when we approach God He is there to welcome us, to reveal Himself to us, and to ultimately transform us more and more into the image of His Son.