

Session 10 The Life-Changing Knowledge of God

INTRODUCTION

Let's look at Paragraph B. "To treasure God's command." John 5:39-40. As I look back at those early years, this is the only other really major passage of Scripture that jolted my life. John 5 and Proverbs 2 were the pivotal passages in terms of the Lord redirecting me.

Again, in the context here, I was about nineteen years old, doing my Bible study every day because my leaders told me I had to study the Bible, but I felt like I was backsliding. I don't mean I was going out and getting drunk every night. I was spending this large amount of time studying and researching the Scriptures, but I didn't like it, and my heart was getting colder and colder. That's what I mean by *backsliding*. It's probably not the best phrase, but my heart was shrinking and getting colder, even though I was spending hours a day in the Scriptures. The reason I was spending hours a day in the Scriptures wasn't because I was so uniquely devoted; it's because when I was eighteen years old, my brother broke his neck in a high school football game. I have five sisters, and one brother who's a year younger than I am. He's totally paralyzed. Even to this day, twenty-five years later, he's still totally paralyzed. I had quit school to go take care of him. He was in the hospital for about a year. I was at his bedside, and I took care of him at our house for about a year or two. And because I was sitting at his bedside for hours a day, I thought, "Well, I might as well just face this deal. I have to study the Bible."

It wasn't like I was consumed with hunger; I really had nothing else to do, so I said, "OK God, You've trapped me; now I'll do it." I started studying the Bible, book by book, all the way through, and reading the commentaries alongside it, but I felt like my heart was shrinking; it was getting colder and colder towards God.

"YOU DO NOT HAVE HIS WORD ABIDING IN YOU"

I was studying for five to eight hours a day, because I was sitting at my brother's side for sixteen to eighteen hours a day. We slept in the same room. I was there twenty-four hours a day. I mean, we were there all the time. He would watch TV or do whatever he did, and I would bring books, because I wanted to go into the ministry, and I didn't have a chance to go to seminary for several years, because I was taking care of him. So I thought, "I'll just get books and read right there next to his bed."

I remember thinking, "I'm in such a mess right now. I've been doing this now for about a year, hours and hours a day, studying the Scriptures constantly, and yet my heart is getting smaller and smaller. I feel like I'm less motivated than I was a year ago."

My leaders said, "Read the Bible for hours a day and you'll be full of fire for God." But the opposite was happening. I said, "Why is this happening?"

So I was reading John 5, because I was studying the gospel of John along with a few commentaries. I came to verse 38. Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees; He says, "You do not have His word abiding in you, because [Him] whom He sent, Him you do not believe" (Jn. 5:38). The Father sent Jesus, but they don't believe Him. Why? Because they don't have His word abiding in them.

“YOU SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES, FOR IN THEM YOU THINK YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE”

Verse 39 is when it began to really become clear. He says, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, but these are those which testify of Me. You are unwilling to come to Me that you might have life. I do not receive honor from men; but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you” (Jn. 5:39-40, paraphrased).

I mean, I was really impacted by this. This passage jumped out at me, just like Proverbs 2. Those were the two really major passages of Scripture, along with Luke 15, about the father rejoicing and embracing the broken son. That was a real watershed, life-changer as well, and so was Ephesians 1:17. Those were the four main passages. Not that you have to figure out the main passages of your life, but those were the real pillars for me. I want to give those to you, for your own consideration, if you’re just beginning with the Lord.

What hit me was John 5:39: “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have life.”

I said, “That’s what I do. For five or ten hours a day, I’m searching”—you can write the word *studying*—“the Scriptures. I’m engaging my mind night and day with the Scriptures. You’re right: ‘You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life.’”

I thought that through Bible study I would experience life. That was the same problem the Pharisees were having; but here’s the key phrase, in verse 40: “But you are not willing to come to Me that you might have life” (Jn. 5:40).

What came to my thinking in a moment’s time is that you can do Bible study all day long, but if you don’t bring your heart to Jesus in your Bible study, you don’t experience life. It hit me like a fiery arrow: “You’re not coming to Me, Mike. You’re not dialoguing with Me. You’re not interacting with Me in your searching of the Scriptures.”

I believe there’s a place for mental study, but there’s also a place to apply your heart like in Proverbs 2, to open your heart to Jesus, to reach for communion with Jesus. I believe that’s part of what I meant when I said “open your heart” in number C. Apply your heart (Jn. 5:42b); be willing to come to dialogue in communion with a real person, Jesus Christ.

EXHORTATIONS TO BELIEVE, EXHORTATIONS TO OBEY

So from that point on, I began to try and have a running dialogue with Jesus as I read the Scriptures. When I found passages of Scripture that exhorted me to obey God, to bridle my tongue, to abstain from youthful lusts, and other things like that, I would take those exhortations to obey and I would turn them into a prayer for help. I would say, “O Lord, help me obey.”

I have two basic categories of Scripture that I use in meditation on the Word: those that exhort me to obey, and those that exhort me to believe. I’ll just take a moment or two on each of them.

For example, I said, “Lord, You want me to bridle my tongue. OK, that’s an exhortation to obey You.” I would make a commitment: “Yes, I’ll do it. I’ll make the commitment to intend to obey Him, but I’m really talking to

a person. I'm not just academically reading: 'Bridling your tongue is a good character quality; remember that for your next sermon.'" No, I wanted to internalize it. I wanted to make it a point, an issue in my life.

I would say, "Lord, I really want to do this." I knew I was speaking to a real person in the Scriptures, so I made this resolve. It's that phrase we used yesterday, the "sweet resolutions," which is a phrase I got from studying the Puritans. I would make this resolve to say yes to it. Then I would ask Him for help. I would say, "Jesus, would You help me? Would You empower me and release grace upon me in this area? Then would You write it upon my mind and my heart? Would You give me desires to obey in this area?"

So I would just ask Him things like this. I would turn this into a dialogue, a running prayer dialogue.

Now there are other scriptures that are exhortations to believe something— not an exhortation to obey something, but to believe it: for example, "God loves you," "You have received the gift of righteousness," "God forgives you of your sins."

Those are issues you believe, right? God is powerful, God is good, you're forgiven. In those instances, I would turn it into a dialogue. I would thank God for it. I would say, "Thank You for this truth. Thank You." Then I would ask Him for the spirit of revelation to make it real in my heart. "Thank You, thank You, thank You, Jesus, that You're full of love. Thank You, Jesus, that You love me. I don't feel like You do, but thank You anyway." Then I would pray Ephesians 1:17: "Give me the spirit of revelation on this point. Open the eyes of my heart to see it."

LEARNING TO ENCOUNTER GOD IN THE PLACE OF THE HEART

Whether I was encountering an exhortation to obey or an exhortation to believe, I turned it into a dialogue. That's how I came to Jesus in the study of Scripture. That was a radical life-changer, because previously I was searching the Scriptures with my mind only, but I wasn't applying my heart as it says in Proverbs 2:2. I wasn't engaging with the Man Christ Jesus, and my heart was shrinking while I was studying for hours a day.

That's the main problem that I have with many, many training institutions, seminaries, and Bible colleges. In our own Bible school, that's one thing we do in Kansas City adamantly: we try to get people to internalize what they're learning and to turn it into dialogue. There's a place for just academic learning; I do believe academic learning is, in and of itself, valuable. It isn't, in and of itself, complete, but it is valuable. I do believe that knowing the historical context, knowing some Greek and Hebrew things, or knowing intellectually the way the Church should be ordered, biblical doctrines—to know these things soundly in our intellect is very valuable. It's just not complete. It isn't enough. It's essential, but not enough.

Often people being trained confuse the value of the new volume of understanding they're getting. They confuse its value and they add one more thought: "It's complete; it's enough to have this." Yes, it's valuable, but it's incomplete, and so often you end up with leaders who have head knowledge, but they don't interact in a fresh way with the Son of God. It's the glory of their life to do this, but in the very quest to be equipped as a pastor they lose Jesus in the quest to serve Jesus.

That's what the Pharisees did in John 5:42. Their problem is exactly what my problem was: they didn't have a growing experience of the love of God. They were searching the Bible, but their experience and their discerning and the warmth of their heart in the love of God was minimizing. It got smaller and smaller and smaller. It was

so valuable for me to get hold of that, so I want to make that point on meditation: we want to seek this thing as silver and hidden treasure.

A LIFELONG PURSUIT OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Again, it's important that we make this like a quest for treasure. It's not just general study of the Bible, but the knowledge of God Himself. I distinguish the Bible in general and all the study of the Word of God from the study specifically of God Himself as a person. When it comes to the study of God Himself, the way I have endeavored to do this is, number one, buying any book in any Christian bookstore I'm at. Whenever I go to a city, one of my hobbies is Christian books. Like I told Wes, "Hey, I want to go to a Christian bookstore and just bum around." I don't really buy many these days because most things don't excite my heart. There are many more books, but what I really want is books on the knowledge of God. Most bookstores don't have but one, and it's more Christian pop. It's very, very introductory, written for maybe a brand-new believer, which I appreciate. Any time I find a book in a catalog or in a library or in a Christian bookstore, like a seminary library—I try to go to seminary libraries just to examine the subject of the knowledge of God. Anyone who has written on it, I want to get it. I've always done that, and, twenty years later, I have maybe a hundred books on the knowledge of God. You can go to ten bookstores in a row and not find one. They're hard to get. They really are hard to get. There's a real deficit in the Body of Christ on this subject. Most of it is highly academic, but to me it's still worth the hassle. Even though you have to have a dictionary to figure out what they're talking about, it's still worth it because these men are typically men who have searched it out in seminaries; they wrote 300- or 400-page books. At least they've studied it academically if not devotionally. It's worth it because you get some real jewels. I get these books, and I read them; I go to a library and I'll check the book out, or I'll get someone who lives there to check it out for me. Then I'll Xerox the whole book if it's a book that's out of print. If it's in print, I'll just Xerox the front cover, the first page, and then order it.

It's a life-long hobby, but more than a hobby. I would say *passion*. I want to discover. I'll turn over every stone and pull every board off the wall to find more knowledge of God. I think the Lord likes this. He says, "OK, good. That's good." I have books that didn't really help me, but you never know. You never can tell.

Then I get my little highlighter out and I underline it. Maybe I highlight 5, 10, 20 percent of the book. It may take me a couple of days or a couple of weeks to read the book, depending on what's happening in my life. Then I'll take my little tape recorder. Not all of you will have the setup to do this, but I speak into my tape recorder as I read the highlighted portion. I speak into my little tape recorder, either direct sentences or just the feeling I'm getting when I'm reading it. I hand it to my secretary—that's the part you don't all have—and she types it out for me, and then I have a file that keeps growing and growing and growing on the knowledge of God. I'll go back and read that and turn it into devotional statements to the Lord. I'll read that and speak it back to God. I'll say, "God, You're this, that, and the other." I'll declare it back to God and meditate on it. Some of it, even after I rewrite it, doesn't do that much for me, but I do it anyway. You never can tell if it's going to inspire you later or not, because if in the moment it inspires you, it may seem a little boring later.

That's the stuff I work off of. That's one line of searching out as hidden treasure the knowledge of God. It can be costly, because typically these books are either Christian pop or academic. You don't find very many books like *The Pleasures of God* by John Piper or even *Knowing God* by J. I. Packer that aren't so academic and aren't Christian pop. They're actually weighty, and yet they're readable. It's rare to find a book that's not highly academic or really light about the knowledge of God. It's hard to get a middle road, because most people don't think on it, they don't study on it, and they don't write on it. They skip it and go to all the other subjects.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD WILL COVER THE EARTH, AS THE WATERS COVER THE SEA

Remember Ephesians 4:13: God has given us apostles and prophets and evangelists until the Church attains to the knowledge of the Son of God. There's going to be a revival on this subject before it's over. I know that worldwide it will cover the earth. Remember all those verses we looked at in Habakkuk and Isaiah and Jeremiah: it will cover the earth before the Lord returns. For some of you, God would want you to do it to edify your soul, because when this wisdom enters your heart, it will be pleasant to your soul (Prov. 2:10). It's good enough if you never teach it, just because it's pleasant to your soul. It will change the way you face temptation; it will change the way you face promotion. It will change the way you face life—the pleasantness of this knowledge. You end up with some of the reward of your life in God. You're carrying it with you. The pleasure of this knowledge is one of the great rewards of this life in the Spirit. You're not nearly so tempted to compromise to try to get an earthly reward.

THE PLEASURE OF THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SON OF GOD

So many people in ministry want to get a bigger platform, more fame, more anointing, more this and that, because they want to feel important and that's their reward—esteem and honor. If esteem and honor is your main reward, it will always be an empty and unsatisfying thing; but if the knowledge of God becomes pleasant in you, that's actually more rewarding than having more people listen to you. It keeps you out of so many temptations when this is operating in your soul, even a little. I don't claim to have it in a great way, but I have it a little. I know it has changed the way I look at life. It's a devotion that brings reward even if you're not a teacher, but if you're a teacher in the Body of Christ this will enhance your ability to communicate to others. Even if you're not a teacher, it's worth it in my opinion. It's worth it because it's so pleasant.

That word *pleasant* is what Paul meant in Philippians 3:8. We looked at it earlier; it's the excellency of the knowledge of the Son of God. This knowledge is so pleasurable; it's so excellent when it enters the heart.

One line is through books, and I think that's a worthy way to do it. Here's another way to do it: take the Bible, Genesis through Revelation, and mark two different, distinct types of passages. It may take you a year. It may take you three years. Even if it does take you three years, so what? You may get tenacious and do it more quickly. Read every line; search it for yourself. Don't just read a book that has already produced it for you.

Some people say, "Give me your notes."

I say, "No, because the very process of doing it is what changes you." Search for it, because you read every line, and you have to bring the word through your soul to determine what it means. That very process is powerful for you.

There are two basic thoughts that I want when I search it. I want verses that declare how important the knowledge of God is, just as a subject, like we looked at the first two mornings. I want to find verses that say, "You'll be renewed according to the knowledge of the image of God": just the declaration of how important and how life-changing the knowledge of God is. I like verses that declare that.

In the same category are verses that declare that there will be a revival of the knowledge of God. I love verses that talk about how important it is in changing me and how inevitable it is that this knowledge will fill the earth.

They encourage me to read them. That's one whole line. I want to find every one of them in the Bible. Again, the Bible is like a big treasure chest. It's like a cave loaded with hidden jewels.

The second line of thought is far more in-depth than the first one. The first one, again, is verses that tell me it's important and that the knowledge of God is going to win; it will cover the earth. You do the two lines together. The second line is to read Genesis through Revelation, and to find any verse that gives you any insight into God's personality in a direct way. In some ways, everything gives insight in an indirect way. You know: "Jacob blessed his sons. Well, I guess Jacob did because God inspired him because God blesses His sons."

That would be endless. I don't mean every indirect reference to something God might be like; I mean every direct reference that describes God's emotions or God's glory in His personhood—for example, the verses in Isaiah 40 that describe how He measures the heavens by the span of His hand. That tells you how great and glorious He is. It's anything that gives you insight into the glory of God, and what His personhood is like. Now that list will be far larger, far larger.

Get them all down. Again, if you don't have the money and can't put them on a computer—of course, I did this for years with no computer. I rewrote them many times because I constantly rewrote the list. Having a secretary with a computer is really cool. It's all rearranged. I love the computer. I don't know how to do it. I have one. We have eighteen pastors on our staff and they always joke about my incompetence. They're all computer-literate, and I have like a \$3,000 or \$4,000 computer with everything on it, and I'm just learning how to put it on. "You know, I just don't know how to type! Guys, I need a secretary, OK?"

They said, "We want you to learn the computer." Wes has been beating on me about becoming computer-literate. I think it's really all right as long as I have that secretary. It's really hard to do it myself. Anyway, that was a bunny trail there.

"WONDERFUL, COUNSELOR, MIGHTY GOD, EVERLASTING FATHER, PRINCE OF PEACE"

Turn to Isaiah 9. I'm going to give you a few more thoughts, and then we're going to change directions and finish this and go into dialogue on anything you want. Tomorrow I have a special verse I want to look at from the Song of Solomon, and then I want to pray it over you at the end of the training—for those of you who have been here all along, the end of ten weeks. It's a commissioning of sorts, so I'll save that for tomorrow.

Isaiah 9 is a very well-known passage of Scripture. "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given. And the government shall be upon His shoulder" (Isa. 9:6). Here it is, right here: His name. Whenever His name is mentioned, that's His nature, His personality. There are five different categories of the name of God revealed in Jesus. These are the five categories that I work off of, because this is what God said about the Messiah. This is what His name, this is what His personhood would be like.

When it says *called*, you can write *discerned*. Number one: His name would be discerned as "Wonderful" by the Body of Christ. There's a whole line of understanding about Jesus' nature and personality under the category of Wonderful. He's pleasurable, soothing to the heart. He really does something to the heart. The second category is Counselor. The third is Mighty God. The fourth is Everlasting or Eternal Father, and the fifth is Prince of Peace.

Whether it was meant this way or not, the way I interpret this is that when God determined to give the Messiah, there's a certain amount of God's personhood that He revealed in Jesus. Jesus possesses all of the revelation of the Father, but there are many things about Jesus that aren't even revealed in the Word of God. There are many things we will only discover in eternity, but what it is that God wanted the human race to know in this age, He revealed through the written Word and through the Man, Christ Jesus. Of course, the Holy Spirit is the divine escort that unlocks the truth of Jesus through the written Word. I think of God saying, "This is what His name is like; these are the things you'll discern about Him."

Under the category of "Wonderful," I put, "The revelation of the Bridegroom." That's the revelation of anything that's pleasing to our soul, the wonderful Jesus. Under the category of Counselor, that's His great wisdom. That's His training and equipping. That's His knowledge; think of how much knowledge Jesus has! It's His omniscience, His all-knowingness, the fact that He has infinite understanding. He's the Counselor. He's the One who knows everything. There are so many concepts of wisdom and understanding that I put under that one.

The next is that He's mighty God. He has sovereign power. He created the earth with one word from His mouth. It's that whole dimension. He's the sovereign God of power. It's His omnipotence, and all the attributes related to His mightiness as the uncreated God. Then there's the fact that He's the Eternal Father. That's His tender embrace: the fact that He's training us. He has the plan for our life as the Father, to train and equip us, to embrace us, to love us, to bring us as heirs into the authority of His kingdom. There are many things I would link to the revelation of Jesus as the Father.

Now Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, isn't the same as the first. There's one God in three Persons, but He has the qualities and the characteristics of His Father. His Father is revealed in Him.

Then there's the Prince of Peace. When I put, "Prince of Peace," I think of Him as the One who makes peace between God and men. He's the atoner of our sin (Rom. 5:1-2). He established peace between God and the human race, so I put all of the redemptive truth there. He bore the sin on the cross so that He could make peace between God and the human race. Then, embedded in that is the fact that there will be peace between nations in the age to come. In the new heavens and the new earth, the nations will be at peace. That's the overflow of His redemption, that He makes peace between God and the human race. I put the revelation of God in those five categories. You don't have to do that, but I find it helpful.

THE FATHER HAS GIVEN THE SON A PEOPLE AS HIS INHERITANCE

I'm going to give you two more passages under this line of "the departments of the Godhead," so to speak. Turn to Psalm 2. Some people don't have my personality, which is good. Many people don't. I mean, they don't want to put it all in categories. I like that. I'm a teacher; I like things in lines. Some folks say, "Nah, I don't want to do it that way," so don't worry about this if it doesn't help you.

Psalm 2:11-12. I have a chapter on this in the book *Passion for Jesus*, so I won't go through all of it here. What happens is that in verse 8 Jesus is asking the Father for His inheritance. Understood in this passage is that Jesus has an inheritance; He's waiting for it. Of course, we know that the inheritance is His eternal companion, a people, His bride. It's a people whom He utterly possesses. The ends of the earth are His possession. That word *possession* means more than Jesus being the head of the governments; He's going to totally possess the heart

and the being of the people of the earth. His people will be His people; they will be wholehearted lovers of God. They will be His entire possession, His inheritance.

THE THREEFOLD INHERITANCE OF JESUS

Now David is going to describe these people whom God totally possesses— the Bride of Christ, the people of God that make up the inheritance of Jesus. That’s the logic of this passage. In verses 11 and 12, he gives what I call “the threefold inheritance of Jesus.” There’s a people who will have three different responses that make up the inheritance of the people God possesses.

Number one: they will “serve the Lord with fear” (Ps. 2:11). They will “rejoice with trembling” (ibid). These people will have fear and trembling. In other words, they will tremble; they will have the fear of the Lord in them. These people will have the fear of God, and they will tremble. They will have such reverence for God’s majesty. They will have holiness; they will have fear and trembling.

Number two: they will be a rejoicing people. Look at verse 11 again. Not only will they tremble; they will also rejoice. They will have gladness. They’re going to be a happy people. Yes, they tremble before the majesty of God, but yes, they rejoice before the goodness of God. They know how to sing and dance. They’re a happy people.

Number three: they know what it means to kiss the Son (Ps. 2:12). They will be a people of passionate affection. They will be people of intimacy. They will be lovers of God. Their hearts will be established in wholehearted love, like John laying his head on the Lord’s breast; like Mary of Bethany who broke the alabaster vial as an extravagant lover of God. They will experience passionate affection; they will be those who kiss the heart of the Son of God.

GOD IS CREATING A PEOPLE WHO TREMBLE, KISS, AND REJOICE

There are three different responses that God wants in each person He possesses. He wants them to have the fear of God with trembling. He wants them to rejoice with gladness and to be happy. He wants them to be affectionate lovers of God, where the affectionate parts of their hearts are given to Jesus. I call it His threefold inheritance: trembling, rejoicing, and kissing. God wants you to be a people who tremble, kiss, and rejoice. Historically, most people fall into a particular movement of the Spirit, or a particular denomination. Denominations are fruits of the movement of the Spirit, because most denominations emerged from a distinct move of God.

Most ministries choose one of those three. There are holiness people who fear the Lord and have a revelation of God’s majesty, but they don’t rejoice very much. Again, this is a stereotype; I’m not thinking of any particular group. Some holiness people are so grouchy; I call it “mean holiness.” Ouch! They won’t do anything bad, but man, no one wants to be with them. Kids are afraid of them, you know?

Then there’s another group. They can dance and rejoice, but it’s like Paul Cain once said: “Lord, they are a little lean on holiness.” They don’t know about the majesty and the fear of the Lord. They treat sin very lightly. Sin doesn’t really matter. As long as they’re happy and dancing and the music is loud and everyone is enjoying it, they’re happy. They’re in sexual sin and compromise and their finances are out of order and they slander each other and get mad. They aren’t really big on holiness, but they’re so happy that they’re going to live forever and God likes them.

And then there's the third group. This group is the smallest group, in my opinion. They're real lovers of God. It's kind of like the mystics throughout history: they're real contemplatives. It's the lady who stays home and puts on her Vineyard worship tapes and cries and loves God all day. There aren't that many of those around, and there aren't many denominations devoted to that flow of the Spirit: being deep lovers of God, intimacy with God.

God wants all three. He really does want all three. Each of those is related to a distinct revelation of God. People have fear and tremble because they see the majesty of God, because they see the mighty God. They see the mighty God and it makes them tremble. Then the other group rejoices. They rejoice because of the Prince of Peace, the One who has atoned for their sin, or the Wonderful Savior. It makes them happy and they rejoice. Another group kisses the Son because they see the affection of the Father, or they see the heavenly Bridegroom. Their heart is moved with affection back towards God.

Anyway, I use those three categories, too. I use the five categories of Isaiah 9:6 and the three categories of Psalm 2:11-12 when I think of the knowledge of God. Of course, that's thinking more of the responses.

“THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES FACE TO FACE, AS A MAN SPEAKS TO HIS FRIEND”

One more: I'll reference it, but I'll not go into it too deeply. It's Exodus 33. Really briefly, without going into detail, I wanted to give you a little structure in your thinking in pursuing the Lord. This is a passage where the Lord is appearing and revealing Himself to Moses. “So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” (Ex. 33:11). It's in the whole context of God wanting to reveal Himself as friendly to Moses. He wants a relationship with Moses. He wants a real friendship with Moses. He reveals Himself face to face.

The Lord spoke to Moses face to face. Whenever the Old Testament reveals God as showing up in front of a person, I understand that to be Jesus, the second person of the Trinity standing before them, not God the Father. When God appears to a person in the Old Testament, I believe it's Jesus appearing to them in His limited glory. They can actually see Him. They never see the face of God the Father, but they can see the face of Jesus. He appears a number of times.

“IF I HAVE FOUND GRACE IN YOUR SIGHT, SHOW ME YOUR WAY, THAT I MAY KNOW”

Moses prays, “Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me Your way” (Ex. 33:13). Why? “That I may know” (ibid). He says, “I like being face to face. I want to know You. I want to know Your ways.” So he establishes the thing from Revelation 1:1.

The reason that's so important is because some people think their discipline changes them. No; their discipline puts them in front of the fire. The fire is what melts the ice. The discipline puts the ice in front of it, but it's the power of the fire that does the melting. Your discipline doesn't change you. The fire is what melts you. The power of God in you is what melts you. The discipline just brings you into contact with the fire; that's all. You don't want to glorify your discipline; that's my point. You want to put your confidence in the fire, in the Spirit who lives within you.

A PRIESTHOOD ACCORDING TO THE POWER OF AN INDESTRUCTIBLE LIFE

I like Hebrews 7:16. The writer of Hebrews said the priesthood we're a part of is according to the power of an indestructible life. He says that Jesus is a member of the order of the priesthood of Melchizedek. He says the priesthood—I love this!—is “according to the power of an indestructible life” (Heb. 7:16, NASB).

In other words, anger is destructible; lust is destructible. The Holy Spirit is indestructible. The Holy Spirit has more power over any bondage in you. Every bondage of sin in your life is a destructible power. The Holy Spirit, when you yield to Him consistently, is indestructible. The fire of the Spirit can melt anything that's placed in front of it for long enough. It's an indestructible life. It's a supernatural thing.

So, again, discipline is not what makes you tender. The fire is what melts you; the discipline just puts you in front of it.

Some people think, “Well, I don't have the temperament to be passionate for God.” You're not a lover of God because you have a temperament. It isn't a natural temperament that makes you a lover of God. You could be a lover of God in a quiet way. It's the Spirit that makes you a lover of God. I don't care how quiet your temperament is, you can be extravagant for God. You may not be loud in expression, but being passionate for Jesus isn't about a loud expression. It's about a heart aflame, and it has nothing to do with your temperament. It's the work of God. It's God's Spirit, not your temperament, that contributes to that.

Some people say, “Well, I'll never be transformed because my past record is so bad. I'm so guilty.” It isn't by your record of sin; it's by the Spirit that you're transformed.

The Holy Spirit doesn't say, “Well, the track record is so bad, you can forget this. We refuse to transform you.” No one is out of reach. It's the Spirit that transforms you, not your track record.

For another person, it's their bondage. “Well, I'm in such bondage. I have so much lust in my heart.”

God says, “It isn't the power of the lust; it's the power of the Spirit that you want to have confidence in.” God has more power than the devil (1 Jn. 4:4).

PASSIONATE CHRISTIANITY IS GOD'S INVITATION TO EVERY SINGLE BELIEVER

So my point is this: when people think of being changed from glory to glory in the image of Jesus, they automatically think, “Well, I'm in such bondage.” Instead of thinking about how powerful the Spirit is, they're thinking about how much bondage they're in. Instead of thinking about how powerful the Spirit is, they're thinking of their own previous track record—of how bad they were. Instead of thinking about how powerful the Spirit is, they think about their temperament. The Lord says, “My Spirit is an indestructible life. I am more powerful than all those things. If you consistently place that icy heart in front of Me, My fire will melt it in time. You be consistent. You just do your part. You behold My Glory in a dim way, and the fire of the Spirit will melt it in time.”

E. “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” (2 Cor. 3:18). Don't yield to subnormal, passionless Christianity, just because the common experience lacks passion. Passionate Christianity is God's

invitation to every single believer; no matter how much bondage you're in today, you can become a passionate believer for Jesus.