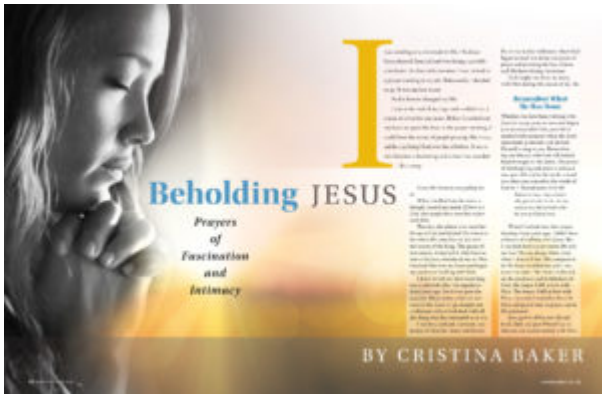


Beholding Jesus

Prayers of Fascination and Intimacy

By Cristina Baker



I was standing at a crossroads in life. I had just been released from jail and was facing a possible conviction. At that crisis moment, I was invited to a prayer meeting at my job. Reluctantly, I decided to go. It was my last resort.

And it forever changed my life.

I was at the end of my rope and couldn't see a reason to even live any more. Before I reached out my hand to open the door to the prayer meeting, I could hear the sound of people praying. But it was unlike anything I had ever heard before. It was a mix between a humming and a roar that sounded like a song.

It was like Someone was pulling me in.

When I walked into the room, a thought crossed my mind: *If there is a God, these people have come face to face with Him.*

That day, the atheist who stuck her fist up at God and denied His existence her whole life came face to face with the beauty of the King. This group of intercessors, immersed in their fascination with Jesus, introduced me to Him. I invited Him

into my heart and began my journey of walking with Him.

I'd love to tell you that everything was a cakewalk after this experience many years ago. But it was quite the opposite. Many times, when we first come to the Lord, we go straight into a wilderness where God deals with all the things that first entangled us in sin.

I was lost, addicted, confused, and unsure of what the future held for me. But it was in this wilderness where God began to teach me about the power of prayer and pursuing the face of Jesus and His heart during the storms.

God taught me about intimacy with Him during this season of my life.

Remember What He Has Done

Whether you have been walking with Jesus for many years or have just begun your journey with Him, your life is marked with moments when the Lord intervened, protected, and showed Himself strong to you. Remembering our history with God will unlock breakthroughs in the Spirit. The power of thanksgiving and praise is released over your life and in the world around you when you remember the words of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18:

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

When I walked into that prayer meeting many years ago, I didn't have a history of walking with Jesus. But I can look back on my entire life and see how He was always there, even when I denied Him. The compassion in His heart ravished me and I was never the same. The more I reflected on the goodness and faithfulness of God, the deeper I fell in love with Him. The deeper I fell in love with Him, the more I wanted to be with Him and spend time in prayer and in His presence!

Jesus gave it all for you. He suffered, died, and gave Himself up so that you can spend eternity with Him. What greater history do we have with God than this?

We have so much to be thankful for, and as you reflect on all that you have walked through with the Lord, your spirit will be moved with a passion for Jesus. You will be filled with the oil of joy that only He can give!

Passion for His presence moves us to pray and seek His face. Remind yourself of what He has delivered you from, every moment you thought it would be the end—and somehow, somehow, God showed up in the 11th hour and broke through in your situation when you thought there was no way.

This is the God we serve. He creates beauty from ashes. And what has been impossible for us, He makes possible. He loves you and has a wondrous plan for your life that He longs to fulfill in you.

I pray that as you read these words today, God will bring to remembrance the moments you have shared with Him. May you be stirred to seek Him and pray with passion!

Rising Above the Storm

In Acts 7:55-56, we read about Stephen's death:

But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

Stephen was nearing the end of his life. He was about to be stoned to death, making him the first martyr of the early Church. At this moment, he shifted his focus from the world around him to the open heavens where he saw the Lord Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of the Father. As Stephen

beheld the face of Jesus and His glory, he became like Him—and even prayed for the very ones who were stoning him!

There is something supernatural and powerful that happens when we pray and fix our eyes on Jesus no matter what is happening in the world around us. The cares and the weights of life fade into the background and the very light of His face, the kindness of His eyes, and the love of His heart for you begin to transform you from the inside out.

Today, despite whatever you're facing or the challenges surrounding you, choose to look away from the cares of this world. Fix your eyes on the One who loves you, sees you, and has your entire world in His hands. Beholding Jesus is what transforms us. Striving will not.

When you connect with His heart and pray, God will shift your perspective from what you see, to what *He* sees. You will rise above the circumstances and storms that surround you.

Loving God, Loving People

As you seek out the heart of God in prayer, your heart changes. His passions become yours—His passion for *people*. Jesus demonstrated this while He walked the earth. The heart of the Father was on display through His Son, and Jesus lived His life serving and loving people.

God's heart has always been about people. He came to the earth for people. He laid His life down for people. The greatest love story of all time—the cross—has always been about people. Connecting with God in prayer changes us. The more you see life through His eyes, your desire to love others the way He loves people becomes your passion!

Over the years, I have found great joy as I connect with His heart in intercessory prayer for others. Jesus said that the expression of our love for Him will be displayed in feeding His sheep (John 21:15-17). Loving people, sharing joy, praying

for and serving others, releasing His peace, and sharing what He has given to us—all these are examples of feeding His sheep. They bring great joy to the heart of our Father!

As you seek the Lord, He fills your cup to overflowing. Share what He has given to you with others. The Father will reward you with the greatest gift that we could ever receive—the fascination and intimacy of His presence.

CRISTINA BAKER has a deep desire for people to find victory and freedom through the power of prayer. She also creates video content on social media. Her book, *Hope in 60 Seconds*, is available at any online bookstore. She resides in Austin, TX, with her husband Ryan and their son Evan.

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