

THE ATTENTION WARS

Reclaiming the Sacred in a Distracted Age
Talk 4 of 4 | July 19, 2026 | Rev. Blaine Tinsley

“Attention Is the Purest Form of Love”

“Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity.”
— Simone Weil

THE FOUR-WEEK JOURNEY

This series has taken us through four movements. Here is where we have been — and where we arrive today:

#	TALK TITLE	CORE TEACHING
1	Where Did My Mind Go?	We are living through a crisis of attention — and it costs us more than we know.
2	The Lost Art of Watchfulness	Ancient traditions preserved a counter-cultural practice: the deliberate guarding of the inner gaze.
3	You Become What You Behold	Attention is not neutral — it shapes us at the deepest level of who we are.
4	Attention Is the Purest Form of Love	Full, undivided presence is not just a spiritual practice — it is the primary language of love.

SIMONE WEIL’S REVOLUTION

Simone Weil, the French philosopher and mystic, wrote that attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity. She believed that prayer, at its deepest level, is not words — it is attentiveness: the turning of the whole self toward the Divine. Words are scaffolding. Attention is the prayer. In Unity, we recognize this in two of the Twelve Powers:

- Faith — the power of directed attention; fixing our inner gaze on what is true, real, and divine.
- Understanding — not mere intellect, but the capacity to stand under reality and truly receive it.

WHAT DISTRACTION ACTUALLY COSTS US

The deepest wound of our distracted age is not lost productivity — it is lost presence to one another. Researchers call it phubbing phone snubbing, the act of giving your attention to a device while another person is present. Studies show that even a silent, face-down phone resting on a table between two people measurably reduces the depth of their connection.

When a parent is frequently distracted by a phone, the child does not conclude that the phone is interesting. The child concludes that they are not interesting. Every time we fragment our attention we send an unintended message: you are not quite enough to hold my whole awareness. Distraction is not neutral. It is, however unintentionally, a withholding of love.

THE MYSTIC CONSENSUS

Across centuries and cultures, every major contemplative tradition arrives at the same truth: full, unhurried, undivided presence is love made visible.

TRADITION	TEACHING
Buddhism	Shoshin — beginner’s mind: meeting each moment fresh, without the overlay of past judgment or future anxiety.
Sufism	Muraqaba — watchful presence: holding the heart open and alert for the movement of the Divine in every moment.
Christian Mysticism	Brother Lawrence: practicing the Presence of God not only in the chapel, but at the kitchen sink — in every ordinary moment.
Unity	I AM — present tense, eternal now. The Living Presence available only in this moment, this breath, this turning of the heart toward what is real.

THREE PRACTICES FOR THIS WEEK

- 1. The Sacred Pause.** Before responding to a person or a device, take one full, conscious breath and ask: Am I here? That breath is a choice — and a prayer.
- 2. The Loving Look.** Once each day, give someone your completely undivided attention for two minutes. No phone. No agenda. No advice. Just your full presence. You will be astonished at what it does — for them, and for you.
- 3. The Closing Question.** End each day asking: Who did I truly attend to today? And where did I withhold my presence? Not as self-criticism — as honest, loving inventory.

A WORD TO CARRY HOME

A few WYT Attention weeks ago, someone stood before me after a talk and offered six words that I have not been able to set down: “I see what you are carrying.” She gave no advice. She offered no solution. She simply looked at me — fully, without flinching, without looking away. And at that moment I understood something I thought I already knew but had not yet felt all the way down to the floor of me: to be truly seen is to be loved. And to truly see is to love. That is what we are here for. Not the scroll, not the notification, not the performance of a life half-present to itself. We are here to attend — to God, to each other, to this extraordinary, unrepeatable, luminous moment that will never come again.

FOR REFLECTION, THIS WEEK

Where this week did I offer my full, undivided attention to someone I love?

Where did I withhold my presence — and what was I attending to instead?

What would change in one key relationship if I practiced the Loving Look daily?

What is one distraction I am willing to release to love more fully?

I AM HERE. • I AM PRESENT. • I AM LOVE, ATTENDING.