

WALK YOUR TALK

What You Behold, You Become by Rev. Blaine Tinsley

The Attention Wars: Reclaiming the Sacred in a Distracted Age ❖ Talk 3 ❖ June 12, 2026 | Unity on Maui

THE SOUL HAS A WINDOW

What was the first thing you looked at this morning? Whatever it was — it began to shape the atmosphere of your day. Quietly. Without your permission. Without your awareness. That is what attention does.

We have been in this series — *The Attention Wars* — asking what it means to reclaim our inner gaze in an age that relentlessly tries to hijack it. Today we go one level deeper. It is not just that attention is being stolen. It is that attention is *forming* us.

What you behold — what you keep returning to, keep looking at, keep giving your *inner yes* to — is slowly, invisibly, and inevitably becoming the shape of your soul.

A VERSE THAT KNOWS THE SECRET

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3:18: “*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.*”

The Greek word translated as “beholding” is *katoptrizomenoi* — to gaze at something as if looking in a mirror. Not a glance. Not a scroll. A *sustained, receptive, open-faced gaze* — the kind of looking where you let something reflect itself back into you.

When you behold the divine without the veil of your assumptions and defenses, you do not just see it. You begin to become it. “From glory to glory.” Not all at once. Degree by degree. Over time.

Plotinus — the third-century philosopher who shaped so much of Christian mysticism — said it plainly: “*The soul becomes what it contemplates.*”

YOUR BRAIN AGREES

Donald Hebb articulated the foundational principle of brain science: *neurons that fire together, wire together*. Every time you direct your attention toward something and hold it there, you physically reshape your brain. The pathways that carry that pattern grow stronger and become the default route your mind takes.

Rick Hanson notes that the brain is built with a negativity bias — it is like *Velcro for the negative and Teflon for the positive*. The anxious thing sticks; the beautiful thing slides off. Beholding what is good and expansive requires intention and practice. The neuroscience does not undermine the scripture. It confirms it: transformation through beholding is not metaphor. It is mechanism.

TWO KINDS OF BEHOLDING

There is beholding that diminishes. And there is beholding that transforms.

When we keep our inner gaze fixed on fear — returning to it, rehearsing it, feeding it with our attention — we do not just see fear. We become fearful. Our nervous system braces. Our thinking narrows. We walk through the world like someone waiting for the next thing to go wrong, because we have trained our vision to find it. When we fix our gaze on criticism, we become small — and we make others feel small. What we behold, we eventually project.

But I have also seen the other thing. My partner Emily was a watercolor artist who spent her life beholding beauty. She would sit at the edge of a waterfall and look at it the way some people look at a beloved face. She would watch the light change on the ocean for an hour, just receiving. The people who saw her paintings were stopped by them — not because of technique, but because they could feel the quality of attention that had gone into them. She had trained her gaze on beauty. And beauty had trained her in return. What she beheld, she became. And what she became, she gave to the rest of us.

LEARNING TO BEHOLD

The Desert Fathers called this practice *Theoria* — divine beholding. Not thinking hard about God, but becoming still enough, receptive enough, that the divine could be *seen*. And in that beholding, the one who looked was transformed.

The Unity tradition carries this same teaching: behold the Christ — the divine nature — in yourself and in every person you encounter. “*I behold the Christ in you*” is not a platitude. It is a decision about where to aim the eye of the soul.

THIS WEEK’S PRACTICE

The next time you look in the mirror — before the inner critic begins its morning announcements — pause for ten seconds. Instead of looking at your face the way you usually do, behold it. See the divine image there: the one who has survived everything you have survived, who has loved and grieved and shown up anyway. Notice what shifts.

The question is not only “What am I looking at?” But: “*What am I allowing to look back at me?*”

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What does your attention most often return to throughout the day? What is that beholding doing to you over time?
2. Is there someone in your life you have been beholding primarily through criticism? What might shift if you practiced seeing their divine nature?
3. What is one beautiful, sacred, or life-giving thing you could choose to behold more intentionally this week?

Affirmation: I choose what I behold. I turn my gaze toward the sacred — in all things, in all people, in myself. I am transformed by what I see.

CLOSING THOUGHT

We are in a war for our attention. The world wants to grab your gaze and sell you a version of reality built on fear, lack, and division. The spiritual path says: you have a choice — not just in the big dramatic moments, but in the ten-second pause at the mirror, in the moment you choose to see the morning rather than the screen.

If we behold fear, we become tight. If we behold criticism, we become small. But when we behold love — when we behold possibility, beauty, and the living Presence within all things — something in us begins to rise. From glory to glory. From magnificence to magnificence.

THIS WEEK’S BLESSING

Go from this place with unveiled eyes.
May the veil of distraction fall away, and may you see — really see —
the sacred light moving through ordinary things:
the color of this morning, the face of the person beside you,
the one looking back at you in the mirror.
May you choose, again and again, where you aim the eye of your soul —
not toward fear, not toward smallness,
but toward the living Presence that breathes through all of it, including you — *especially* you.
And may you know this: what you behold with love, you bless.
What you bless begins to bloom. What blooms in you, you offer to the world.
You are being transformed — from magnificence to magnificence —
by every sacred thing you choose to see.
Go now. And behold. Amen.