

Chapter 08

When the Eyes of the Heart Begin to Open

There is a remarkable difference between looking... and seeing.

We can pass the same tree every morning without ever noticing the way sunlight finds its branches.

We can drive the same road for years and miss the small stream quietly flowing beneath the bridge.

Familiarity has a curious way of making beauty invisible.

Not because beauty has disappeared.

Because we have stopped expecting to find it.

Perhaps the same is true of people.

We become accustomed to names...

Faces.

Occupations.

Appearances.

Successes.

Failures.

Soon we begin seeing labels instead of lives.

We no longer meet a person.

We meet our conclusions about them.

I wonder how often this happens with ourselves.

We look into a mirror and see accomplishments...

Regrets.

Aging.

Mistakes.

The opinions of others.

Rarely do we see the quiet dignity that has been there all along.

Perhaps the hardest face to see clearly is our own.

Years ago, I met a woman whose husband was nearing the end of his life.

She apologized because she was crying...

"I'm sorry," she whispered, "I should be stronger."

I remember wondering...

Who taught her that tears were weakness?

Who convinced her that love should look composed?

As I watched her hold her husband's hand,

I didn't see weakness,

I saw courage wearing tears.

How different our lives might become if we learned to see beneath appearances.

Anger may be protecting fear.

Silence may be carrying *grief*.

Control may be hiding *uncertainty*.

Confidence may be covering *loneliness*.

Kindness may be the fruit of *suffering* no one else ever noticed.

Every person is more than the moment in which we meet them.

The older I become, the more I believe that wisdom begins with refusing to reduce people.

No one is their worst day.

No one is their greatest success.

No one is the label placed upon them.

Every human being is a story still unfolding.

This may explain something that has always fascinated me about Jesus.

He seemed almost incapable of seeing people only as they appeared.

Others saw a tax collector... He saw a future friend.

Others saw a fisherman... He saw someone who would strengthen others.

Others saw a woman surrounded by shame... He saw someone still worthy of dignity.

Again and again, He looked past the obvious without ever ignoring the real.

Love has extraordinary eyesight.

Perhaps this is what Paul meant when he wrote,

"From now on, we regard no one according to the flesh."

No one, *"from a worldly point of view."*

For years I read those words as theology.

Now they feel like an invitation.

An invitation to see beneath fear.

Beneath failure.

Beneath reputation.

To meet people where Love has always known them.

Seeing this way changes more than relationships.

It changes the person who is seeing...

Judgment begins losing its grip.

Curiosity quietly takes its place.

Compassion grows.

Listening deepens.

Patience becomes possible.

Not because people have become easier to love...

Because we have begun seeing them differently.

There is a quiet miracle hidden in every genuine encounter.

For a few moments...

Someone is no longer an interruption.

Or a problem.

Or a stranger.

They become a mystery.

And mysteries are never conquered.

They are received.

Perhaps this is why Presence matters so deeply.

Presence slows us enough to notice.

And noticing is often the first act of love.

Sit With This...

Think of someone you find difficult to understand.

Don't try to solve them.

Simply ask yourself,

What part of their story might I not be seeing?

Sometimes compassion begins, not with an answer...

but with a different way of looking.
