

Voices: People are worth extravagant love. Ask Jesus.

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I stood on a rooftop, gazing out over the glittering skyscrapers rising majestically over the city I always will call home. When brought face to face with beauty beyond breath, the kind of awe-inspiring and word-depriving sights we travel hundreds—or even thousands—of miles to wonder at, I cannot help but think of all the people who scurry about in the shadows of such masterpieces.

I thought of all the people who designed those buildings, who made those visions a reality, who toiled tirelessly within them earlier that day, and who looked at them from the outskirts of Houston with desperate dreams, seeing those buildings every day, but never having the means to walk through the literal heavens to which they lift their occupants.

When I look on all of this, I cannot help but think as beautiful as that skyline is, or the most scenic of mountains, or the most tranquil of shimmering seas in the most Instagram-worthy vacation spot, they are nothing next to the image-bearing faces admiring them day after day.

When I think about that, I think about how easily we overlook the beauty, not only right underneath, but completely surrounding our noses.

It isn't wrong to admire these works of art, some crafted by both God and others by humans. Like all works of art, they were made to stir us, to receive slack jawed and dumbfounded stares.

But we never should let them distract us from the magnum opuses milling about around them—the people.

Made for each other

It's the people who matter. It's the people who truly make all our travel and trekking and searching worthwhile. People should take our breath away.

I could enjoy any of the aforementioned sights by myself, but when I have, there was a twinge of pain in my heart telling me an integral part of the picture was missing. The wondrous sights are not quite as beautiful as the faces of my friends glowing like angels.

Yes, God made Niagara Falls and said it was good. But when he made Adam, he said Adam was *very* good. To me, that signals where the true beauty and goodness is to be found.

I fear we as a culture have come to value experiences, novelty and the stories we might collect more than the people with whom we share them. We were made for God and for each other, and I do not believe life can be savored fully apart from either.

There is a reason solitary confinement is such a horrific punishment, why hermits tend to go a little kooky, why—in the depths of our loneliness—we long for anything to fill the achingly empty space next to us.

We were not made to be alone. We were made to enjoy and experience this life together, because the single greatest gift we have in this world outside of the new life given by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is other people.

Connecting can be hard

I know this is difficult for some of us, because people have hurt us or let us down, or betrayed us, or we simply have a natural predisposition towards solitude.

Some of us struggle to connect. That is an insidious, devastating effect of the Fall that not only split open a chasm between us and God, but between you and me.

The distance is daunting, but not insurmountable. It is not always easy, but it is worth it, even if we can't see it fully now or ever.

People are worth loving more, not less

I have been told several times—especially lately—I expect too much, give too much or don't focus enough on myself. The implication is I should love less. I wholeheartedly disagree. Love smarter or love better, certainly, but I cannot believe the answer possibly could be to love less.

People—with all their flaws and imperfections, trauma and wounding, sin and depravity, toxicity and self-destructiveness—are worth that love infinitely. Jesus certainly believed so, even though we gave him every conceivable reason not to love us infinitely.

In the words of Christian rapper Propaganda, “[W]orth, value, and beauty are not determined by some innate quality, but by the length to which the owner will go to possess them.”

So, cross oceans, scale skyscrapers, climb mountains, venture through and to the sketchiest parts of town to show people how much value they have. Blow all your money on plane tickets and hotel rooms, take off a week from work, power through a meal you don't like just so you can see someone's face light up, even for a moment.

Go to all the same lengths you would to see one of the Seven Wonders of the World, simply to tell someone he or she is the eighth and most wonderful wonder of them all, because they are worth it.

People are worth it.

Love them like Jesus did and does to this day.

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