

TO BE KNOWN

In every human heart there is a desire at some level to be seen, to be known, to be loved. We were created to love and be loved; thus, when we feel unloved, we seek love in a continuum of ways. We are wired to think that if we are known, we will be loved, so we search for love by seeking to be known. The desire to be known has a range of motivations, some seemingly better than others, but all broken. We attempt to be known....

1. FOR BEING TERRIBLE

Sometimes we seek to be known for being powerful or for causing fear, for being dangerous or notorious for some egregious or outlandish behavior. Sometimes it's subtler. We seek to be known for being shocking, for being contrary, for being hard to please. When we seek attention by flirting, by crudity, by exaggeration, or by bragging, these all are permutations of what is wicked, and we are seeking to be known for being terrible.

2. FOR BEING KNOWN

Sometimes we seek to be known for being beautiful, strong, glamorous, rich, witty, charming, adventurous, courageous, or erudite. We buy into the lie that any attention is good attention, and we crave the eyes, respect, and admiration of others, no matter what it costs our body, soul, or relationships. It's the celebrity syndrome. We just want attention, and we do anything (with diminishing returns) to get it.

3. FOR BEING DIFFERENT

Sometimes we seek to be known by being unique. Our identity is that we are other, opposed to whatever anyone says, for we find people notice us when we object. We can be that negative voice that always finds fault, for our critical orientation makes others pay attention to us, makes others try to please us—and this feeds our vanity. We feel better about ourselves when we find fault in others. We find value in non-conformity, not based on principle but based on attention.

4. FOR BEING INCLUSIVE

Sometimes we seek to be known by being generous of heart, pluralistic, broad-minded, accommodating, pleasing to all. When inclusivity at heart is from a desire to be affirmed, it leads to the dilution of truth and a reverse bigotry that accepts all, except those who are themselves principled. When inclusion is the goal, perversion is the result.

5. FOR KNOWING

Sometimes we seek to be known by being the expert in the field. Our self-value is drawn when we think we know more than others or when others laud us as the leading light in a particular arena. We put great effort into our specialty, for it brings us praise, which we mistake for love.

6. FOR BEING GOOD

Sometimes we seek to be known for being wise, kind, and generous. We want to be known for being a good spouse, a good parent, a good team member, or a good leader. We draw affirmation for being humanitarians, liberal, for doing the right thing, for behavior that society finds refreshing and empowering of others. Our value comes from the commendation we receive when our good deeds are recognized by others. We love others because we want desperately to be loved.

7. FOR BEING HOLY

Sometimes, both in the circle of faith and by the watching world, we want to be known for being righteous, spiritual, prayerful, or anointed. Our identity and worth are drawn from people's respect of our "godliness." We make it our ambition to be known for being biblical, pure, and devout. This desire can be all the more twisted as it has a great appearance of virtue.

8. FOR BEING FRUITFUL

Sometimes we seek to be known for being effective in ministry. We take our pride and energy from having a large church, from having a broad ministry, from influencing many and making many disciples, from having a spiritual tree that is the envy of our peers. We work, labor, and dedicate ourselves in spiritual service so that we will be known as the one with the most significant ministry impact.

9. FOR BEING FAITHFUL

Sometimes we scorn our colleagues who take pride in being known for numbers and make the equal and opposite error of wanting to be known for being faithful. We shun the spotlight but secretly revel in how many years we have been laboring in obscure places with scant attention. We still secretly want attention, but we want it because we have built a reputation of faithfulness.

10. FOR BEING UNKNOWN

Sometimes all the above motivations repel us, and we frame our desire to be known through the curious twist of wanting to be unknown. This desire can be the most complex as it does indeed recognize the danger of the desire to be known, yet deep down there is still a longing for recognition. Similar to being proud for being humble, this desire can be the most convoluted of them all.

11. FOR MAKING HIM KNOWN

Sometimes we seek attention by being the outspoken one for Jesus. We seek apostolic fame by being the one who pioneers, the one who is bold, the one who risks all for Christ, the one who endures hardship, isolation, danger, persecution, scorn, and the loss of all things. Our value is drawn by being recognized for being zealous for the glory of God. Like all these latter motivations there is a subtle something not quite plumb, a pursuit of noble and priceless goals that is colored yet by that incessant desire to be known, known for what is right.

12. FOR KNOWING HIM

Sometimes we realize that being known for our actions, even our actions for Him, is suspect and we simply desire to know Him. We desire others to see that the central aspect of our being is that we long to know Jesus. While this may be the purest of the desires to be known, it is still broken, as are all the desires to be known.

The continuum of reasons to be known above are all marred, some worse than others. They are marred because at their root is the desire to be known, rather than the desire to know. Paul did not say, "I want to be known for knowing Christ"; he just wanted to know Christ. The purest motivation of heart is the simple desire to know Jesus and the laying down of wanting to be known. We Christians long to be known with all men; we just tend to spiritualize what is at its core a broken self-love. Only in laying down the desire to be known and taking up the raging desire to know Christ can we truly be pure in heart.

I confess that all 12 of the desires to be known above have flickered or raged in my heart, and still do. Jesus, forgive me. Jesus, may my ambition truly be not to be known, not even for good things. Let my one fire be to know Christ.

For when we simply, purely, wholly long to know Jesus, we realize we are already known. He sees us, He knows us, and He loves us. Secure in the knowledge that our Creator loves us, knows us, and sees us, we no longer need to be seen or known by man. We then do what is good, true, and holy for His sake, not for the sake of being known, and we glow from the inside out with the security of the love of God.

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