

What is Jesus Doing?

SPIRITUAL FATHERS AND SONS

About a year after I moved to Simi Valley, the Holy Spirit led me to a Men's Bible Study at a large local church called Discovery Church. As it happened, when I arrived the first Saturday, I was astounded to find that the place was packed to the rafters, about 45 men at 7 tables, at 7 AM no less! Now you probably can't imagine how excited I was to see this kind of turn out for a Men's Bible Study. I had come from a Church in the San Fernando Valley where I had led the Men's Ministry one Saturday a month and whenever I would suggest that we meet more frequently, the Pastor would tell me that "it isn't fair to the men's families to take them away more than once a month". Now in fairness to that Pastor, because his traditional time for the once-a-month Saturday was 9 AM, that might have been true, because by the time they got home it was 11:30 or Noon, and half the day was gone. However, if you get the men to come at 7 AM, they get steeped in the Word of God and then come home to their families around 9 AM when the kiddos are just waking up. The family then gets a husband and dad who is on fire with the Holy Spirit for the rest of the day. Brilliant!

So, I was enthused when I got to this 7 AM Study to say the least. At the end of the teaching at this Bible Study, we were asked to go around each table and get prayer requests from each other so that we could pray during the week. Now, irrepressible me, filled with the Holy Spirit, I had to insist that my table take prayer requests and pray right then and there! Well, these were the right group of men at the right time, because that practice spread like wildfire from table to table to God's Glory, and in the following weeks all the men at all the tables were praying in the Spirit and the men started seeing the kinds of miracles of answered prayer that only happens when the Body prays fervently and effectually for each other in community with the Spirit of the Lord.

What is Jesus Doing?

About two months later, I was asked to be a teacher, in regular rotation, and I really got to know a great number of these men who I came to think of as my fellow soldiers in Christ's glorious Army of saints. One in particular, was a giant of a young man named Bill, who came up to me after a study that I taught about the Love of God. He was in tears and said that he was touched by the lesson and we exchanged cell numbers. I began meeting with and discipling Bill regularly and watched his growth in joy, as he overcame some huge generational struggles in the early time that I knew him and went on to become the most amazing servant of God! His ministry is his work as a Contractor with the men he hires and in AA where he attracts and disciples men through their struggles with drugs and alcohol. His love for these men and tenacity always humbles me. I am so proud of the man of God Bill has become!

I feel about Bill as the apostle Paul must have felt when he said:

For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.

- 1 Corinthians 4:15-17

Last night I hosted Abundant Life's 2 Thursday Bible Study at the Samaritan Center and I asked Bill to teach the lesson. Bill brought a few of the guys with him that typically meet at one of their homes on Thursday nights, including some of the Discovery Church Men's Bible group. It was a great blessing to see that one of them was my good friend Gary, who has also grown up mightily in the Lord, and was a blessed addition to this group. Bill taught on the Holy Spirit, and he had prepared masterfully not only the outline and supporting scriptures, but questions for the flock that comes on these evenings to go deeper in the Word and be edified.

What is Jesus Doing?

Now I will say, that I have found that teaching and ministering to homeless people, the love is always amplified because of Jesus' own love of the poor and when we are obedient to take our time and gifts to their table, as it were, they always eat and drink with gusto and bless us all. That said, I was struck by the beautiful balance between the working men and the homeless folks at the table and how the love of Christ was so palpable as everyone gave their input through the Holy Spirit throughout Bill's teaching.

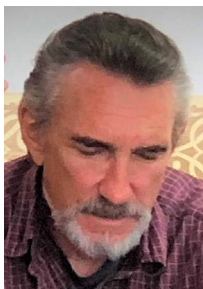
We prayed for each other afterwards and we could all feel how our Father in Heaven was glorified as His sons and daughters, in grateful obedience to His Word, went boldly before the Throne of Grace for each other. What a blessing it is to be anointed by the Most High God to be a tree where many birds can nest and to see the fruit of the Holy Spirit's Presence blooming on so many of the soldiers He has called. I am blessed and humbled by these men who you have sent me Lord, and those in the flock who have received Your Word and Truth in Love.

C.S. Lewis said it best.

For a Christian, there are, strictly speaking, no chances. A secret Master of the Ceremonies has been at work. Christ, who said to the disciples "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," can truly say to every group of Christian friends "You have not chosen one another but I have chosen you for one another.

I thank God for Bill and Gary and all those soldiers with whom I am serving in His Love to form a mighty cadre here on earth. I will save the Army of God for a future blog.

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*To all the beloved, in His grip of Love,
- John Henry Raskin, Roadhouse Rabbi*