ESSAY · MAY 13, 2016

What I Never Saw Before

Written by Bill Perkins

I counted twenty-three times in the Gospels that Jesus referred directly or indirectly to his death and/or resurrection. In none of those instances did the disciples understand what he was talking about.

Not once.

Get Behind Me, Satan

The most memorable occurred when Jesus told the disciples he must “go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s” (Matt. 16:21-23).

He Didn't Hear What Followed

Once Peter heard Jesus mention being killed, he didn’t hear what followed: "and be raised up on the third day” (Mt. 16:21). Since he didn’t hear that statement, he didn’t ask, “What do you mean, ‘be raised up on the third day’?” If he had it would have prompted a discussion I’d like to have heard.

As Close as My Nose

It’s easy to wonder why the disciples never understood the Lord’s clear and repeated statements. And then I wondered if I too have a reality as close as my nose that I can’t or won’t see. And so I began to pray, “Lord, if there’s something I don’t see that’s right in front of me, please show me.”

One day he answered my prayer. It involved my thought life.

Mental Debates

I used to spend a lot of time mentally debating people. I devised countless arguments about potential subjects of discussion with someone I would soon meet. Or, with someone I hoped to meet. By the time we met, I had considered everything I thought they might say, and had a ready answer. Unfortunately, I sometimes came across as defensive. Wonder why?

Now I Ask Questions

Once I realized this about myself, I considered how I missed it for so long. The good news is I'm changing. Now before meeting with someone I try to focus on questions I could ask. Questions that allow them to share their point of view. Questions about their thoughts and dreams. Questions that will help me know them better.

Does this make you wonder what you don’t see that’s as close as your nose? If so, ask God. But be prepared for an answer that might hurt. At least in the short run.