

Title: Zevian, Monsters in the Closet, and “BIG JESUS.”

March 9, 2013

Greetings all,

I wanted to share another encouraging Immanuel story (below). This story is also the draft for one of the story chapters of the Immanuel book we're working on.

Blessings,

Dr. Lehman/Karl

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Zevian, Monsters in the Closet, and “BIG JESUS.”

Three year old Zevian first began to be afraid of monsters when he thought he saw one in his closet as he was getting ready for bed. His parents reassured him and showed him that there was nothing there, but he was still anxious as he got into bed and was glad to be sleeping next to his big brother. After this first episode of monsters in the closet, each night seemed to get a little worse. His mom and dad continued to reassure him, and talked to him about how Jesus was with him and would take care of him, but his fear just kept getting worse and each night he would talk about how Rawrs (his word for monsters) were going to get him. He started getting back out of bed after the usual bed-time rituals, and would come to his parents and ask to sleep with them. One night they heard his terrified shrieks and then the shouts of his siblings, and when they rushed into his bedroom they found him shaking with fear. When Jenelle, his mother, picked him up he clung to her desperately, and his little body was rigid with fear. After this particularly upsetting episode Jenelle began rocking and singing him to sleep each night, but she knew this wasn't solving the real problem because he continued to express intense fear that monsters were going to get him.

Then one night, as Jenelle noticed Zevian's rising fear and tried to reassure him with, “Zevian, you're safe. Nothing's going to get you,” she was shocked and dismayed when he responded, emphatically, with, “Mom, Jesus is Rawr. Jesus get me.” Jenelle recalls vividly, “Those words hit hard. What does a mother say to such a sinister lie placed in the heart of her sweet, little boy? I said, ‘No Zevian, Jesus loves you. He would never get you.’ Yet, I could see that my little boy believed this lie and my words had little effect. I was helpless to convince my son of God's goodness.”

Thankfully, this wasn't the end of the story. As Jenelle remembers,

“Helplessness has its benefits though, because in that moment I knew only Jesus could sort out this mess. I took my boy in my arms--my heart aching to feel his body stiff with fear. I asked him to close his eyes and I prayed protection upon this moment and upon our hearts. Then I asked Jesus to show Zevian what He is really like, and I waited. Almost immediately I felt his body start to relax. At first he kept his eyes closed while a big smile crept across his face. And then after about 45 seconds his eyes popped open, dancing with joy instead of fearful, and he laughed out, “BIG JESUS!” His whole countenance had changed as he started to pull himself out of my arms in order to get back in bed, looking at a specific place in the room as he did so (I can only guess this is where he saw Jesus). Then as he started to put himself under his covers, light and happy, he added one more gem about his time with Jesus. He said, ‘Jesus like me.’”

Since seeing “BIG JESUS” in his bedroom that night, Zevian has been a different kid. He now regularly, spontaneously talks about Jesus, he always wants to pray, and after Jenelle prays for him at bedtime he often reports things like, “Jesus says He’s going to play at the park with me in my dreams.” Oh, and the problem with monsters has completely resolved. There was one night a few days later when Zevian began to get fearful at bedtime, but Jenelle once again prayed that he could see Jesus, and after a brief pause he laughed aloud and said, “Jesus eating crackers. He sharing with me.”¹ Now when Zevian talks about monsters, he’s the one getting them.

This is a cool, beautiful, encouraging story, but you probably noticed that Jenelle didn’t coach Zevian to recall positive memories, stir up appreciation, establish an interactive connection with Jesus, and then focus on Jesus and ask Him for help regarding the monster problem. She just held him in her arms, offered a quick prayer for protection from demonic interference, and then asked Jesus to show Zevian the truth about Himself. You might reasonably ask, “So what makes this an Immanuel approach story, as opposed to just an encouraging prayer story?” The answer has to do with the context in which this simple, powerful interaction occurred. Even though this was the first time Zevian perceived and recognized Jesus’ tangible presence,² he has been surrounded by the Immanuel approach for most of his life. For example, he has observed the older children at his church participating in simple Immanuel approach exercises, such as deliberate appreciation and perceiving Jesus’ presence, he has observed Immanuel approach principles and tools being applied in his home with his older siblings, and he has often heard his parents talking about how they experience Jesus’ presence in the context of Immanuel approach emotional healing.

¹By the way, Zevian particularly loves crackers (actually, he sometimes has a problem with sneaking them out of the cupboard).

²In light of the fact that Zevian was initially afraid of Jesus, believing that Jesus was a monster and that Jesus would “get him,” I think we can safely assume that Zevian had not had prior positive experiences in which he perceived Jesus’ tangible presence (and recognized it for what it was).

Jenelle perceives that her own Immanuel work has also contributed to her ability to facilitate this simple yet profound Immanuel connection for her son. As she reports,

“I believe that my encounters with Jesus through Immanuel Prayer had a huge impact on Zevian being able to see Jesus. In the past, I don’t think I would have really believed that Jesus would come and help Zevian in his fear. I may have said I believed it, but when it really came down to it I don’t think I would have turned to Jesus. I would have believed it was up to me. Because I trusted Jesus, then Zevian didn’t feel fear and hesitation from me. If I had attempted Immanuel prayer with him earlier, he may have felt my worries, questions, and fear, but since I have been having my own experiences of Jesus’ Immanuel presence, Zevian was able to attune with my faith and see Jesus as well.”

Our observation is that when Immanuel approach principles and tools are integrated into a person’s church community and family (as is the case with Jenelle and Zevian), we routinely see powerful Immanuel experiences with even the most basic Immanuel approach interventions (as was the case with Zevian’s experience in response to Jenelle’s incredibly brief, simple prayer).

In the course of our correspondence about the monsters in the closet, Jenelle also shared another beautiful story of Zevian’s new awareness of Jesus’ presence. One day Jenelle was in a lot of pain regarding a piece of her own healing journey, and as she sat on her bed crying, Zevian came in and noticed her distress. He climbed up on the bed with her, gave her a big hug, and said, “You need Jesus with you.” Jenelle responded that she knew he was right, but that she couldn’t feel Jesus right at that moment, and then she asked Zevian if he could feel Jesus. He responded promptly with, “Yes, He’s right there” (pointing to the spot immediately behind her on the bed). And as soon as Zevian pointed her to Jesus, the anxiety that had previously been visible on his face resolved completely (apparently he thought she was in good hands). He then jumped off the bed and trotted out of her room to go play with his siblings. Jenelle summarizes Zevian’s ongoing Immanuel experience with, “Knowing Jesus is with him seems to be his normal state right now.”