

Questions Answered

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There we were, Junior and Senior Painting majors at the Kansas City Art Institute, getting ready to review and critique artwork. All the canvases looked similar as they lined the room, either representing the posed model or a still life; and while the paintings had slight differences due to each student's unique sensibilities or perspective from the room, the focus being taught was to look really hard and record on canvas the observed color relationships, one area next to another to another, resulting in a direct representation of what you observed. I began questioning if this is how I wanted to paint, and it was at this same time that I was making friends on campus, who happened to be Christian.

As I reflect upon growing-up, I certainly remember my fifteen years of perfect attendance Sunday school pins, though I actually couldn't tell you any of the lessons learned as a child attending church. But it was here and now in art school how thankful I was for my dad who brought me to church weekly and instilled Jesus deep in my soul, which was now stirring inside. My friends & I would do the usual college routines; shoot baskets, late night walks to the convenient store, and practical jokes in the dorms, but also introduced to me were the daily half-hour radio broadcasts of Chuck Swindoll, attending lively church services right outside the campus walls and even starting our own prayer group. In time, as I grew spiritually with these precious friends and enjoyed a relationship with Jesus, the answers to my questions I had asked about painting were falling in place.

The final semester of art school, and two-years of graduate work at the Yale School of Art, were not only an attempt to incorporate my faith into the subject of my artwork but a firm decision. Enjoying and using more gestural brushstrokes, I painted Biblical scenes. While absolutely supported by faculty and peers (a surprising comfort), you had better know each figure in a scene and get the architecture historically correct. I recall one painting of Jesus and His disciples in the garden praying, mostly painted with greens for the ground, blues for clothes and reds for skin tones, and it was interpreted as sun-bathers in a field or people exercising. Eventually the topics were pinned down to "prayer and praise" using contemporary people which are the main focus to this day.

Now, thirty-years later, I find myself increasing the studio time for drawing and painting. Within this span have been many important levels of growth and endless blessings by a faithful God. While a first marriage failed, from it arose two wonderful children with loving spirits and now adults. After I became overwhelmed, falling into a self-made trap of busyness at one church, from it led to a fresh start at my current church home. Here, now fifteen-years at Church On The Rock – New Haven, God has worked in awesome ways, by walking down the path of life with a loving Savior: from over-coming obstacles by-way-of the Men's Ministry to facilitating; being prepared for marriage then finding my amazing wife; and other priceless blessings including being healed from Crohn's disease, understanding finances, and involved in Missions work and Church Leadership. And, so wonderfully supported and encouraged as a painter.

The theme of figures praising and praying to a Mighty God seems endless and is full of life. In addition to the experiences at COTR are the visions, ideas and even colors which appear during worship. People's visions shared with me have become paintings. Painted subjects come from God's Word, messages or several parables combined may fill a canvas. The powerful images of praise with hands-raised, or figures in tearful prayer facedown, broken before God in need of healing, or the world outside the church walls and the ever-inspiring art past and present keep the studio fresh and exciting. All this started because I welcomed God's presence which was stirred-up so long ago. I was questioning how things should look and God opened my eyes not only to art, but to life. Obstacles were removed and the vision became clear – now that's how I want to paint – that's how I want to live.