

Interview Questions for Jill Penrod

1. Why did you write *Seen and Invited: Meeting Jesus on the Dusty Roads*?

My pastor gave an Epiphany sermon where he asked why the disciples followed Jesus. At that point he hadn't done miracles. He was new and unknown. But he held private conversations with several men, seeing them deeply. Then he invited them to join him, to be part of something new. I realized Jesus continued to do that, seeing and healing and gathering people all over Israel and inviting them into his story. And he still does it today, ever seeing people's deepest hearts and drawing them close to him.

2. In the book, you say Jesus "performed the most amazing balancing act while he was here." What do you mean by this?

Jesus came with many duties and personas, all wrapped in one man. He's a shepherd. A prophet. He has the authority of a king. He lived out events from the Old Testament and showed how to live a godly life. He reached thousands in three short years. In the book I focus on that shepherd compassion, the need to protect and gather those he loves. It's one of the most powerful drivers behind everything he does. Only that kind of compassion could lead a man to a cross. I want readers to see Jesus as a whole person with all these dimensions, but if they close the book and only remember Jesus's tender shepherd love, I have succeeded in my writing.

3. What's the most important thing readers will learn from *Seen and Invited*?

My hope for this book is that people will fall in love with Jesus. My younger self learned all the stories in Sunday school, when Jesus was a bright, happy character drawn on a take-home page. Then my older self couldn't quite fit that image with the Jesus who turned over tables and seemed exasperated with everyone. As I watched Jesus the Shepherd touch the lepers and tenderly look into the eyes of the deaf and the sick and the grieving, I fell in love. I want everyone to have the opportunity to do the same.

4. People listening to/reading this often struggle to have a strong relationship with Jesus. What's your best advice on how they can deal with that?

The first chapter in my book is called "Proximity Matters", and it explores Jesus healing a lame man lowered through a roof. I think that's the most valuable concept in the book: *Get Close to Jesus*. Read the Gospel stories. Imagine them. Talk about them with other believers. Loving Jesus has to do with knowing Jesus, so do whatever you can to find yourself at his feet and in his sights, and don't look away.

5. When do you write? Is it easier to write in the morning or at night?

In a perfect world I could write all the time. However, I like to get the pressing work of the day done first, like marketing and returning emails, and then spend my afternoons writing. It's my lowest physical energy time of day, but if I'm careful about diet and rest, it's a big mental energy time for me. But any time and any place will do. A few weeks ago I plotted an entire novella in a dentist waiting room while my son had some cavities filled.

6. Who's your favorite author?

My answer changes every time someone asks me this question. Apparently I'm not a loyal reader. However, the two nonfiction books I've marked up the most are by Dallas Willard and Elyse Fitzpatrick. These are authors I return to again and again. I'm also a fan of Ann Voskamp and Louie Giglio. And as for fiction—here I'm crazy fickle. My younger self loved the old fantasy books by Piers Anthony. I still have a few of those with missing covers and broken binding from so many read throughs.

7. Where can we buy the book?

The paperback and hard cover books are only at Amazon. The ebook version is available wherever ebooks are sold, including a few library ebook systems like Hoopla.