

Through the Eyes of the Watchman: Visions, Dreams and Spiritual Travels from the Front Lines

Justin E. Garner Jr.

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In his memoir, *Through the Eyes of the Watchman: Visions, Dreams, and Spiritual Travels from the Front Lines*, the Reverend Justin E. Garner uses a casual, conversational tone and vivid descriptions to depict his deep-rooted relationship with God.

Organized chronologically, the book begins with Garner exploring his earliest memories of talking to God and progresses as his comprehension of religion becomes more mature and his spiritual encounters become more frequent. They eventually culminate into his strongest encounter with the Holy Spirit: an out-of-body experience where he is taken to heaven and comes into direct contact with Jesus himself. He also takes the time to delve into his father's spiritual history, revealing the strong bond he has with his father.

Through the Eyes of the Watchman consists purely of personal accounts, and the style of writing reflects that. The prose is unadorned and straightforward, focusing more on the clarity of the content than the sophistication of the diction. The simplicity of the language and sentence structure reflects the casual and uncut feel of oral narrative. This impression is only affirmed by the occasional break from first to second person, which makes the content more approachable and easier to grasp, especially with the abundance of spiritual revelations throughout the memoir.

Periodically, Garner is able to harness moments of poignant imagery. In one scene he describes a strong summer storm that he witnessed while on the road with his father, who was preaching revivals throughout the South: "Sparks flew from the temporary power pole near the travel trailers, as it was buffeted by the wind and rain." Though few and far between, these soft moments evoke the feeling of godly power that Garner is trying to convey more clearly than many of the more blatant testimonies that Garner has curated.

Garner derives every thought, word, and action from his belief in God's word, and God is as much of a character in the book as Garner and his family. Statements such as "God called to me around 5 o'clock" are commonplace throughout the pages, though it is unclear whether God's voice is represented by an intuitive feeling or a literal voice heard by the listener. The routine nature of this occurrence exemplifies the essential theme that Garner is attempting to evoke: God is "all powerful," yet somehow his presence is as habitual and natural to him as that of a loved one.

Through the Eyes of the Watchman stands out as a personal testimony of one man's experiences with God. This book is a quick yet thought-provoking read.

RENATE CHILDS (September 13, 2016)

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