



A Deeper Walk with Jesus Joe White

Ted Cunningham: Today is a special treat for us. We get to welcome our friend, Joe White, to share. every few months, I get a text message from Joe that simply says, "Put me in coach." So, today, he gets in the game. Would you help me give a nice warm welcome to our good friend, Dr. Joe White?

Joe White: Well, I decide today was a good day to have a garage sale. Does anybody wear a size 12 shoe? They're for sale up front. Do I have any bidders? Size twelve men's. I've even got some onesies up here. Anybody need a onesie.

So, obsolete products... Anybody remember IPana toothpaste? Come on way back there, you do. Typewriters? Floppy discs? Eight tracks? Joe White's shoes. Cassette tapes? L&M Cigarettes? Low tar, more taste. Don't settle for one without the other." I didn't smoke them, but I remember the song. LSMFT? Anybody remember that? Lucky Strike means fine tobacco. Hey, I don't want to send anybody off here in case y'all need to leave and go out an have a... Beep Beep the Roadrunner. Where did he go? Tom and Jerry cartoons? Those are some of the greatest cartoons. What happened to those things? What happened to Polaroid Cameras? Weren't those great? Eastman Kodak. Take them to the dark room and, six weeks later, you get your pictures back. Remember that? I miss those things.

Anyway, I just wanted y'all to say goodbye to the twins. This week, we get to go back in, and one of them is going to become a little shorter than the other one. The doctor told me we were going to get a freebee this time. We've had two we've had to pay for, but now we're going to get a freebee. We're going to chop this thing off again. We have some issues here.

But I just tell you that and I show you my garage shoe items here today because I'm not sad. It's a fact, y'all, a couple of weeks ago, the doctor said, "Hey, we've got to cut that thing off again." You would think I'd be depressed, but it was amazing. My emotions were like, "Okay, we've done that before; you can to that again. That's not that bad." I think that's blue. Is one of them blue. One of them looks bluer than the other one. Sometimes I put on the wrong color socks. I'm kind of older; I can't even see down that far. Are they both black? I think they are.

Anyway, the darker it gets out there, the brighter it gets in my heart. The crazier it gets out there, honestly, the more peaceful it gets in here. My times with the Lord get more peaceful as things go, you know, worse. In fact, the more hopeless it gets with my legs, the more hopeful it gets for my heart. Isn't that fun? The more I get disconnected from all the fun things of this world that I used to do, the more intimately I find myself connected with our Savior.

I thought I would just touch on that a little bit this morning. What does it mean to have a deeper walk with Jesus? Some of y'all understand that, for some of y'all, it seems mysterious. I was looking, Katie, at that beautiful little bumper video of all those beautiful pathways, all those beautiful little roadways that y'all had pictures of. That was beautiful, Katie. Today I want to just maybe ease down one of those pathways with y'all. I call it the pathway to intimacy.

A friend of mine called me this morning. A dear friend who is now walking with the Savior, a fine young athlete, a brilliant young man, a young man from Denver named Randy Robinson. Randy was a really great facial surgeon. His job was to travel around the world and rebuild faces for children with deformed faces. And in third world countries over in China and over in Viet Nam and other places around the world. He would rebuild faces in children. He'd take these grossly distorted faces and turn them into beautiful, smiling faces.

Randy called me the other day almost as if to say good-bye. He may not die, but he's in stage 4 liver cancer and on his way to New York to do a very, very difficult surgery that only one doctor in the nation would do. Randy talked about his intimacy with Christ. He said, "Joe, I feel like Bartimaeus in Chapter 10:49, where blind Bartimaeus is called down by the disciples and they said, "Rise up. He's calling your name." Randy said, "I feel like he's calling my name right now." He said, "Now, in my pain and in my suffering is when I get to be one-on-one with Jesus."

I was texting last week with Chris Bennett. His little wife, Julie, sweet precious, big smiling face Julie, now in her second time to shave her head and her second time to go bald. In her second time to go through horrible, horrible, difficult rounds of chemo therapy. And this time for the double mastectomy. Julie was talking about how intimate her walk is. She said, "You know, now, in these days with Jesus..." As all of her little, beautiful children look up to her and her husband loves her and all of the things of this world are around her, and now in stage 4 reoccurring breast cancer, she talked about it is now in the trenches. She said, "The wars goes on around me. God has me laying in the trenches in the peace of the battle, and when the war ends, I'll come out of the trenches and I'll be a better person. I'll be closer to Jesus than I was before the war started."

Lest you think intimacy is reserved for the meek and the lonely and the faint of heart... In a conversation this week with the toughest man I know, Mike Singletary, the fifth toughest player in NFL history, according to some. This guy had made 1,488 tackles, with ten times in the pro bowl. They called him Samurai Mike because of the way he cut running backs in half. Mike, with his five daughters and two sons who adore their daddy, tough on the football field, but intimately sweet off the football field. Mike said, "The more I trust Jesus, the more intimately I walk with Jesus..."

Would you think intimacy would come out of the mouth of someone like that? He talked about the Superbowl. When he led the Chicago Bears to the victory over the New England Patriots... He talked about beating the Patriots in the Superbowl and he said, "Joe, as the confetti was falling around me, I had no intimacy with Christ, because I there realized as the trophy was given and I kissed the trophy, I realized I hadn't forgiven my dad." He said, "I was the most miserable and the loneliest I had ever been in my life because I had no intimacy with Christ because I hadn't forgiven my dad."

Men and women, I will tell you women love intimacy, but, ladies, underneath the crust, underneath the silver armor for us men, there is not a man alive who doesn't crave intimacy, especially if it's hidden with the Savior. I have hugged convicts. I've hugged murders. I've hugged Green Berets. I've hugged Navy Seals. I've hugged Special Ops. I've hugged gang members. I've hugged motorcycle gangs at the events I've done over the years where all these men would show up from all parts of the society of the United States of America. They would come up to the cross and they would just dive into my arms, wanting to be hugged because so many of these men had missed intimacy in their childhood and they had never been hugged before. And there at the cross, they would find intimacy with Jesus.

I remember this Green Beret came back from Iraq. He had been shot up by friendly fire of all things. He took his purple heart, and I remember hugging this man. He was like hugging steel. This guy had been in the heat of the battle and there, as a purple heart recipient, took his purple heart and he pinned it on my shirt. I'll never forget it as long as I live. He found intimacy with his savior there at the cross. He wanted a hug to prove it.

Going deep in football is the corner route. It's the deep post for the deep pass. Going deep in scuba diving is going down 70, 80, 90 feet deep in the coral reefs where all the little green eel come out and all the angel fish swim and all the little barnacles live and the manta rays swimming casually by. And the little sharks peeping out from behind the rocks. It's a beautiful sight going deep in scuba diving.

Going deep in a dental chair is a bad day at the dental office. But going deep with Jesus is the greatest treasure of a man or woman's life. What is it about intimacy with Jesus and why is it so important? Intimacy with Jesus turns the Bible into a love letter. If you find the Bible a daily duty, if you find the Bible something you have to do just before you go to bed or just when you wake up in the morning, maybe to please somebody in your family or to please your spouse or to check off some list somewhere...

Intimately walking with Jesus makes that Bible the sweetest love letter. You can't wait to memorize another passage from David's psalms. You know it was David that said, in Psalms 149: 47, "I love, I delight, I cherish your commandments O God." Yall, David was William Wallace on steroids. I'm talking about the guy who took on the giant with a slingshot. I'm talking about the guy who looked at the giant and said, "You come to me with javelin and sword and spear, but I come to you (he was about 5'6" facing this 9' guy) in the name of the godly armies, Israel, whom you taunt. He said, "God's going to deliver you into my hands and I'm going to cut off your head." Can you imagine that? "And I'm going to feed the armies, dead philistine soldiers, to the birds of the sky and the beast of the field." This was the guy who killed thousands of philistine soldiers with his bear hands and this was the guy, like Mike Singletary, who said, "I love my tenderness with God. I love my intimacy."

The Bible becomes a love letter when you walk in intimacy with Christ. And when you walk intimately with the Savior, the relationships in your life that matter the most will become uninterrupted, unhampered throughout your lifetime. These men that I counsel who get bored with their wives and bored with their children and bored with their jobs and bored with the beauty of being 45, 46, 47, 48, 49 years old. Instead of running from their family, when they find intimacy with Christ, they begin to cling

to their wife and their children and live the best days of their life in their 50s, 60s, 70s and maybe in their 80s.

It's intimacy, men and women, that solves the problems of the hurt of your childhood. Those of you who brought a father wound into your adult life, those of you who brought a wound from a previous marriage or a previous broken relationship into your adult life, it's intimacy that heals. It's intimacy that takes away the anger of the hurt of childhood or broken relationships. It's intimacy that brings emotional stability. It's intimacy that takes away the worry and the fear of cancer and the fear of growing old and the fear of being hurt. It's intimacy that puts a spring in your step even when you don't have a step to step in.

I will tell you, folks, it is true; my wife bears witness that it's true. It's intimacy that makes you identify with one of the most interesting characters in all of scripture. If I could take you down a little pathway of intimacy, I want to introduce you to somebody. You've heard about him before. You've read about him before. In fact, you've read his biography before. He's a little-known character, but if a picture is worth a thousand words... See if you can find this character in this little video clip. It was put together by one Roma Downey and one Mark Burnett, who made a visit to Kanakuk one day to show this little clip to us. I was fascinated by the artwork. One of the characters you will recognize. See if you recognize the other and see if you see yourself in the face of this insignificant character of history.

[video plays]

Joe White: So, to the man I'm speaking to who didn't grow up getting hugged, to the woman I'm speaking to who has had her heart shattered before... And in that shattering of your heart, it's come maybe a little bit hard. To the guy out there who has never really known what it means to have an intimate relationship with the Savior, I want to tell you something today. God loves the Matthew inside of you. There's a Matthew inside of every man. I've discovered that around this country.

There's a Matthew inside of every woman. God loves the meekness inside of you. He loves the brokenness inside of you. He loves the integrity that resides way down deep in your heart. Yeah, the Pharisee, the other guy, sometimes we pretend like we're the Pharisee. "I've got this thing, God. I know what I'm doing. God, you can go along with me in my plans. God, Sunday morning is for you, but the rest of the week, that's my time." Not that man, but the Matthew inside of you, God loves that man.

Then I want to take you to the same group of faces a little bit later in Jesus' life, a different moment in Jesus' life, and I want you to look for another face. You're going to recognize Peter, you're going to recognize Thomas, you're probably going to recognize Judas, and you'll recognize Jesus. But I want you to look for another face and see if you see yourself in another face in this next little clip from the same movie.

[video plays]

Joe White: Did you see him? Did you see his face? John. Do you recognize yourself in that face? See if this song melts into your heart the way it does mine every time I hear it.

Singing – No one ever cared for me like Jesus.

*If my heart could tell a story
If my life would sing a song
If I have a testimony
If I have anything at all*

*No one ever cared for me like Jesus
His faithful hand has held me all this way
And when I'm old and grey
And all my days are numbered on the earth
Let it be known in you alone
My joy was found
Oh my joy, my joy*

*Let my children tell their children
Let this be their memory
That all my treasure was in heaven
And you were everything to me*

*No one ever cared for me like Jesus
His faithful hand has held me all this way
And when I'm old and grey
And all my days are numbered on the earth
Let it be known in you alone
My joy was found
I've found my joy*

*I'm still in love
Your still enough for me
Still all I want
Your still my everything
I'm still in love
Your still enough for me
Still all I want
Your still my everything*

*No one ever cared for me like Jesus
His faithful hand has held me all this way
And when I'm old and grey
And all my days are numbered on the earth
Let it be known in you alone
My joy was found*

Joe White: Have you ever wondered why Jesus came when crucifixions were the way for capitol punishment? Have you ever wondered why he didn't come when electrical chairs were more in style, and gas chambers and lethal injections weren't maybe a quicker way out? I was thinking about that this week. I was thinking about those eyes on the cross. I may be wrong on this, men and women, but I believe at least part of the reason why Jesus came when crosses were in style was so he could see you in your hour of greatest need. So he could meet you in your quest for purity, when you pray for repentance at night before you go to bed some nights after yet one more in the string of failures, if you're like me. So that he could rescue you when you dog paddle in the puddle of deepest tears that surround you. So he could join you and your need for a Savior. So he could feel you in your quest for intimacy.

I believe that's why when Jesus was with his best friends and he filled the cup, he could say, "This cup is the new covenant, my blood." And he could see himself the next day with blood streaming out the side of his chest and his wrists and his ankles and his brow and his shredded body. I believe it was the cross where he could say, "Tomorrow, they are going to do this to me." I believe it was on the cross, like Mike Singletary and the championship, where he could realize, I haven't broken bread with my dad. Or, like the young college girl I talked to this week who found her walk with Christ when she forgave her dad for leaving her when she was a little girl and never being there for her.

When Jesus broke the bread, he could enter this sanctuary this morning, if you will, as you and I break the bread, as you and I partake of his spilled blood. You know what, folks, as we go through this ceremony, if you will, everyone got a little piece of black paper. I thought about it this morning and I was reminded about this by a friend of mine out on the east coast one time. He talked about the veil. He talked about what it meant when Christ's body was broken and when Hebrews 10 picks up on it and it says, "We enter through the veil that is flesh."

What it's saying, men and women, is when his flesh was torn... (the veil is probably one of the most incredible, theological statements in all of the Bible that the veil into the Holy of Holies was torn as his flesh was torn) ...instead of the priest, once a year, walking around the veil, into the Holy of Holies, to fellowship with God and to place the blood of the lamb on the Mercy Seat of God to forgive the sins of the people for a year, that the veil would be torn from top to bottom, so that we this morning – incredible thought – not as another church ceremony, not just visiting with the idea of communion, but being a part of the family. Not just a church moment, but a moment of intimacy for our lives.

Some of us probably the first time we ever, through the covenant meal, entered into relationship at the Last Supper. So, we gave you this little piece of black paper. So, before we take this meal together this morning, I just want you to think about it for just a second. And I want you to have a moment with God. I want this to be an experience, not a ceremony. Behind the veil, it costs you nothing. Behind the veil, it's safe. Behind the veil, it's just another Sunday morning. But through the veil, it costs you everything. Through the veil, it pays you everything. Through the veil, instead of religion, it's relationship. Through the veil, a walk of intimacy begins.

So, I'm going to ask you to pray with me as you prepare your heart. We'll just go to Psalm 51 so we can pray it together. And you can just pray it with me out loud. But like Mike at the Superbowl, realize that forgiveness is a two-way street. Realize when you say "be gracious to me," you're also speaking on behalf of those who have offended you because that's where intimacy breaks down. You're also saying to those who offended you, "I'll be gracious to them as well." Folks, where the bond of family begins...

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.**
- 2 Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.**
- 3 For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.**
- 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.**
- 5 Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.**
- 6 Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.**
- 7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.**
- 8 Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.**

- 9 Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.**
- 10 Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.**
- 11 Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.**
- 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.**

As we close the service today, take your time. And when your heart is ready to walk down one of those pathways, to walk down a pathway into the heart of God and to walk with him more closely than you've ever walked with him before in your life and hopefully, men and women, to walk with him in intimacy the rest of your life, so that when things happen, there'll be no fear, there will be no anxiety. There will be trust.

This is my body, he said, broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me. This cup is the new covenant, my blood.