

8/28/12

Week 36

James: Well, all of you who are here, you're where I know at least 20 million people wish they were. Way on up beyond that watched this young man on YouTube; Jefferson Bethke is his name. I don't think anybody really knew his name, may not have even cared. You're trying to figure out what this guy is doing when he talks about basically "I hate religion but it ended up I love Jesus" and so you're beginning to wonder, is the guy mad at the church or what's going on?

I want to say this, and right here locally in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, let me just say, Jack Graham, Prestonwood Church, hey Jack, I've always admired you and loved you. You've been here, been a guest many times, we've been friends for years. But when the media and a lot of people came down on this guy, Jack, you just immediately stood up and said, "You know what? He's just right about a lot of things he's saying about where religion gets out of place. I believe he loves Jesus and I believe we need to be listening."

Jack, as you're going to hear from the young man yourself what that meant to him at the moment when the fray and the views began, you stood like a statesman for God and I want to thank you.

You're going to get to hear the young man yourself right here. Why don't we just listen to that YouTube that went viral immediately and went around the world? Here it is.

Begin video clip:

>> What if I told you Jesus came to abolish religion.
What if I told you voting Republican really wasn't his mission?
What if I told you Republican doesn't automatically mean Christian
And just because you call some people blind
Doesn't automatically give you vision.
I mean if religion is so great,
Why has it started so many wars?
Why does it build huge churches
But fails to feed the poor?
Tells single moms God doesn't love them
If they've ever had a divorce
But in the Old Testament

God actually calls
Religious people whores.
Religion might preach grace,
But another thing they practice
Tend to ridicule God's people,
They did it to John the Baptist.
They can't fix their problems
And so they just mask it,
Not realizing religion's
Like spraying perfume on a casket.
See the problem with religion
Is it never gets to the core.
It's just behavior modification
Like a long list of chores.
Like let's dress up the outside,
Make it look nice and neat
But it is funny, that's what
They used to do to mummies
While the corpse rots underneath.
Now I ain't judgin',
I'm just saying
Quit putting on a fake look,
'Cause there's a problem
If people only know you're a Christian
By your Facebook.
I mean in every other aspect of life,
You know that logic is unworthy.
It's like saying you play for the Lakers
Just because you bought a Jersey.
See, this was me too
But no one seemed to be on to me
Acting like a church kid
While addicted to pornography.
See on Sunday I'd go to church,
But Saturday getting faded,
Acting as if I was simply created
To just have sex and get wasted.
See I spent my whole life
Building this facade of neatness
But now that I know Jesus,

I boast in my weakness
Because if grace is water,
Then the church should be an ocean.
It is not a museum for good people,
It is a hospital for the broken,
Which means I don't have to hide my failure,
I don't have to hide my sin
Because it doesn't depend on me
It depends on him.
See because when I was God's enemy
And certainly not a fan,
He looked down and said, "I want that man."
Which is why Jesus hated religion
And for it, he called them fools.
Don't you see so much better
Than just following some rules?
Now let me clarify,
I love the church,
I love the Bible
And yes, I believe in sin
But if Jesus came to your church,
Would they actually let him in?
See, remember he was called a glutton
And a drunkard by religious men.
But the son of God
Never supports self-righteousness,
Not now, not then.
Now back to the point,
One thing is vital to mention.
How Jesus and religion
Are on opposite spectrums.
See one's the work of God
But one's a man-made invention.
See one is the cure
But the other is the infection.
See because religion says "do,"
Jesus says "done."
Religion says "slave,"
Jesus says "son."
Religion puts you in bondage

While Jesus sets you free.
Religion makes you blind
But Jesus makes you see.
That's why religion
And Jesus are two different claims.
Religion is man searching for God;
Christianity is God searching for man.
Which is why salvation is freely mine,
and forgiveness is my own,
Not based on my merits,
But Jesus' obedience alone.
Because he took the crown of thorns
And the blood dripped down his face,
He took what we all deserved.
I guess that's why you call it grace.
And while being murdered,
He yelled, "Father, forgive them,
They know not what they do,"
Because when he was dangling on that cross,
He was thinking of you.
And he absorbed all of your sin
And he buried it in the tomb
Which is why I'm kneeling at the cross saying,
"Come on, there's room."
So for religion, no I hate it.
In fact, I literally resent it
Because when Jesus said, "It is finished,"
I believe he meant it.
End of clip

[Standing ovation]

James: I love it! I was impressed to reach over and pick up a book I wrote 12 years ago because one of the chapters in it is: "Religion Can be Dangerous."

Jefferson: I should have had you in the video.

[Laughter]

James: I want you to know that you echoed what I believe every sensitive-to-God person knows in their heart. And by the way, if you take offense because you know, you really appreciate what's happened at church, and you think he was taking a shot at your church or your fellowship or your family, you didn't hear him.

He was exposing idolatry or religion that has replaced relationship and we've moved over into the worship of something that not only keeps us from God, it keeps others from being drawn to God.

I really appreciate the way you said it. Now tell us about yourself because you obviously, you experienced some things where you had seen that religion didn't have - it had a bad side and then you saw the beautiful side of Jesus.

Jefferson: Yeah, so I mean I came to this realization through experience, I didn't come -- and then of course, through reading.

But growing up I was the kid who I was better than you because I didn't smoke, I didn't drink, I didn't have sex and that was going to get me to heaven. Right? And I would call myself a Christian because of that.

Then I get to high school and girls became a lot more attractive than those rules; right?

[Laughter]

Because here's the truth, if you are trying to white knuckle God and you're trying to combat the pleasures of the world with just hard working obedience that has no intimacy with Jesus, it's not going to work, you're going to fail. And that's what happened. The world got more attractive.

I said, "I'm in. I'll do that now." And then I started living that lifestyle for a few years and that's where I came to the realization that I tried to articulate in the video that there's two enemies of Jesus. There is one enemy of sin and they manifest themselves in two ways: Rebellion and religion. Rebellion of the "I can do whatever I want, get out of my life, let me do... I'm God." Right?

And there's religion where I can earn my way to God, I can earn his favor, and that's not me making that up, that's completely biblical in Luke 15 of the prodigal son. What we've done to that story is we've made it simply about the rebellious son because the

rebellious son, and this was me, and I didn't learn this difference forever, where the rebellious son comes home and it's a beautiful picture of grace, of just the father embracing the son in his filth, in his mud, which is exactly what the cross is, right? At the cross he's embracing us in our dirtiness but then that's it, that's just the story.

But not in the scripture, that's what we make it but then the scripture keeps going where then all of the sudden the older brother kind of hears some music, he kind of hears maybe the hip hop, the base thumping and he's like, "What's going on?"

And one the servants says, "Your dad is throwing a party, your brother came home and he was dead and now he is alive."

What does the older son do? He says, "That's not fair! I was good, I did what my dad wanted, I should be in there." And that's religion.

Then the father comes out and says, "Everything has been yours, I just wanted intimacy."

The rules are okay, but that's when they flow from intimacy and the older son missed that and we never address that, we only address the younger son.

James: I say "amen" to all of it. Now that you've had the exposure, what do you think God wants to do with it? Because I know and I've said this to you in private and I knew it when I saw you, I knew it when we were visiting before we came out here, you really do have a special touch of God. Did you write that poem?

Jefferson: Yep, yep.

James: And did you just kind of sit down and go through it and then you said, "Hey, I'd like to find a way to do it?" Did somebody else give you some ideas or did you come up with the whole picture of how you were going to do it?

Jefferson: Yeah, so I definitely won't steal any thunder or glory from that. What happened is I actually read a book called *Prodigal God* by a guy named Tim Keller. Anyone needs to read that book if they have access to it because that's exactly what I just explained; it shows that juxtaposition. I read it and I was like, "Man, I need to do something with this."

At this time I was in college so I wrote the poem in hopes to perform it in front of a few hundred people at my open mike and then it didn't happen because I graduated

and they didn't have another open mike at the end of the year. Sat on it, never think I would ever do anything with it. Then one of my best friends is a video guy and said, "Hey, let's put it on YouTube."

I said, "Okay. Cool, all three people will see it."

[Laughter]

And then it got a little crazy.

[Laughter]

So what changed your life from that erroneous way you were walking and then when you turned around and you reached that point, what brought about -- the Keller book or what was it?

Jefferson: It was a process for me but I would say there is a few different ways you can come to God, it's not always just the crash and burn essentially but mine was close to that. Mine was -- I was always the guy that everything I touched turned to gold. I was on the good baseball team. I had the girlfriend.

Then all of the sudden when God started to slowly pull those things from me, I realized my life was built on sand and it wasn't, it was sinking and it was empty and it was foolish. That's what he did; he took two idols from me really quick. I was freshman year of college. I got kicked off the baseball team, I got put on academic probation, and my girlfriend broke up with me all in like 24 hours. I was like, this sucks.

[Laughter]

It was rough and it was really tough. It was in that moment that God showed me that me, as the king of my own life, doesn't end well. Anyone as the god or king of their own life does not end well.

It was in that moment that I opened the scriptures and I started to read the scriptures. And at first I was like, was this even the Bible I was reading as a kid because it seemed so much more vibrant, so much more different. I saw Jesus who was compassionate and just gentle and would cross racial and socioeconomic lines.

But then I'd flip the page and see a Jesus who makes a whip of cords and goes U.F.C. on all of these people in the temple; right? And so I'm just like, this dude cannot be put on a box. I want in. Like, I want him. And that's when I started following.

James: And you definitely can't put him in a box. And humanity tries.

Betty: Were you surprised with the response from the video?

Jefferson: Completely surprised on both ends. I didn't think it would strike a chord in regards to resonating with so many people in a good way and I didn't think it would strike a chord with making people that angry at me, which was really difficult on both ends -- it was really difficult because I think, in the human heart, especially in my generation, because we're the most fatherless generation that has ever lived, we just want someone to tell us we're good enough. That's really the goal of most of my age demographic. That's why people in high school usually say good-bye to Jesus on the altar of cool. They'll do anything if only their friends tell them they're cool.

And God exposed that in my heart; he completely exposed it where I didn't realize I was addicted to the praise of man until either they all really told me I was awesome or they all told me I wasn't and all of the sudden I started craving it. It was through that that I realized that Jesus' affirmation -- God's affirmation of Jesus in the cross and his resurrection is my identity.

James: Boy, that's great. I want to be an encourager and I want to help you do in any way what you believe God wants you to do. I think our viewers would love to pray for you. What do you think God wants you to do? What do you see right now?

Jefferson: In the future?

James: Yeah.

Jefferson: It's a tough question; right? My roommate always makes fun of me because he's like, "Bro, you don't even know what you're going to eat two hours from now." So I'm like -- people ask me that question and I'm like, "If I can talk about Jesus I'm in."

I've tried to pray about that and try to really think about that and I think the way God's leading is I have a huge heart for urban ministry, inner city ministry, kind of like Tim Keller, which is why I have such an affinity towards him, where I want to see -- because the thing I see, on a whole, I see someone either being very great at the proclamation of the word, every Sunday they just preach the Bible for an hour, they

expose the scriptures and it's great, and then their church building sits empty for six days a week.

Or I see someone who says, "Oh, we just need to love on everyone. Let's just bring fairy dust on everyone and everyone will be good and everyone will be awesome." And then they show the display of the proclamation of the word but I want to do both. I want a place that manifests his body.

James: I'm getting a vision with you. Right now -- I'm serious. And I'm being serious with you because you're being an answer to prayer I've had because I come from the sons, I'm the product of rape, no father, never had a home and I was real poor. I went and preached to the homeless people here in Fort Worth the other day, it was real special. And I've been praying for a long time to be able to get to the inner city kids.

I've never thought this. I'm trying to get the suburban/urban churches and all the surrounding upper end churches to help the inner city churches. I'm working on that. I'm succeeding at it and a lot of people can tell you that because it's in my heart.

What I just heard you saying, "These churches sit empty during the week," I just really wonder if it wouldn't be possible -- and by the way, if you can show me how and you can go back and talk to your pastor about it because this is big on my heart because I am a father, I'm a grandfather. I want to talk to the kids in the inner city about coming from nothing and not living up with hate and how you get the father when you didn't have a father, and how you have a relationship and you can really look beyond your pain and see possibilities and there is nothing impossible. I want to talk to them.

But I had this little vision while you were talking. What if we could try to encourage some of the churches to let somebody like yourself and I'll be glad to work with you, I'll try to get people to work with you, we might just have to start somewhere and see it build. But ask some of the churches to make their building available during the week for us to get the inner city kids to all come and listen to you and maybe some cool music and maybe on old man -- maybe an old man like me.

Jefferson: We could tweets.

[Laughter]

James: We could tweet, Twitter, whatever you want to do. You might teach me. You could teach me some stuff.

Jefferson: We'll do a poem duet.

James: Hey, we could go though and love these kids. Does that even make sense? In other words, if the churches would make a building available during the week, because these kids, they're not hung up on we got to go on the weekend, they like to go somewhere at night. Their mom might let them go, if there was somewhere they could go that's decent. Nobody is getting drunk down there. They're just going to sit around and tweet.

[Laughter]

I really heard that. Let me give you this little thing that I've learned this year. I've been around a long time but I'm on an interesting journey. Abraham went out not knowing where, he didn't have a clue. He just knew he was following.

You heard this song, it was a country song: One day at a time, sweet Jesus. You may not -- have you ever heard that?

Jefferson: I was going to try to lie and say, yeah but...

[Laughter]

James: Believe me it was there. But let me tell you.

Jefferson: Garth Brooks? Brad Paisley?

James: Let me tell you I've got something.

Jefferson: Taylor Swift?

James: I've got something more relevant -- more relevant, one step at a time, sweet Jesus, that's how you're living right now. That's the safest way to live. So don't be disappointed if you can't see too far down the road.

But what I'm doing is dreaming with you. You just said something pretty big and it's going out all over the world. What if churches would make their buildings, your

beautiful paid-for buildings, put you some security down there if you're just scared spitless; okay? I don't know why you need security, you're not bothering anybody.

[Laughter]

Here's the thing. Look -- if they would open their buildings and let somebody like you come in and say, "I want to talk to all the kids." And maybe an old guy like me come in and say, talk about fathers. Does it make sense?

Jefferson: No, that makes a ton of sense. I think that's what we need. We need someone who doesn't make the church building an idol, who that thing is so worn out by the time they die and we go to glory but I don't think that Jesus is going to look at the building -- "And I wish you would have redone the carpet before you came up here."

[Laughter]

But they should be worn out because there should be kingdom work going on in them. That's my heart; my heart is to whether it is in the building or in the city. I mean a lot of people always want to be this huge televangelist and preaching all over the world but sometimes my dream is to literally move into the inner city and be a good husband and father because that is the biggest ministry that will touch their hearts.

James: That's my heart. See, me and Betty are both sitting here wishing we could get off television because --. No, I'm serious. You don't understand. We're here by divine assignment. She says I bring her up here kicking and screaming every week. I just drag her up here. We want to just go off and disappear. God won't let us. This is an assignment here.

It's like he stuck you on there. You didn't know that was going to go like that. But what we can do together, with all the viewers, we can pray, "God, show us our steps."

And everyone out here, what all of you out here in this audience need to understand is, that it is really, really important that all of you get it. See, this is not like -- this must be somebody so special. Look what God did. Hear this out here in this audience; you have no idea how special you are to God. You have no idea how important you are to his purpose, his kingdom purpose. No idea!

Say, "God show me." And it could be that you touch one person.

But just, "God, what do you want to do with me?" You're so important! You're so special.

Father, I pray you'll show Jefferson and every person watching and every person in this studio how special you are, how special you should be to them and how special they are to you.

I pray dear God, that they will right now say, "Lord, you're going to be the center of my life. I'm going to have intimacy with you and I want you to direct my steps."

And God, thank you for the churches that become the family that expresses your life and your love, and heal our churches and make them healthy, in Jesus' name.

You want someone to pray with you? Call the number; we'll be so happy to pray with you and to pray for you. Would you say thanks to God and thanks to Jefferson for sharing with us?

Jefferson: Thank you so much.

James: I want all of you right now to know we are giving smiles and shoes for Christmas. There will be people calling right now saying, "Pray with me." I want to show you someone you can be an answer to their prayer and to their need. Watch.

On the mission field:

Announcer: *LIFE Outreach International's* mission is to share the truth of God's love in word and deed with people throughout the world. Together, with our friends and partners, we provide the essentials of life for people; like water for those who for the first time in their life now have safe clean water to drink; for thousands of children who once suffered from malnutrition but now have a hot meal to eat each day; young girls once in bondage in the dark and deadly world of human trafficking are being rescued and restored; and families, trapped in grinding poverty now have hope for a better future living in a safe and secure home provided by *LIFE*.

This season we once again have the opportunity to impact the lives of thousands of children who are exposed to the ravages of hookworm disease simply because they don't have protection for their feet. It is a simple remedy -- shoes! Shoes that can prevent children from suffering anemia, malnutrition, and in severe cases death caused by hookworms that invade their bodies through their feet.

Randy: This is a significant outreach towards improving the health and the lives of children all around the world. Not all of you can come here and have the privilege that I have of actually putting the shoes on the feet of these beautiful children, but you can still be a big part because really, we can't do it without you. Do what you can. Give as many pairs of shoes as you can. Every time you do it, you'll be making a child's day and you'll be improving their health.

End of clip

In the studio:

James: I want you to put that little kid back up there. I want everybody to see that. Look at that little fella, how happy he is. You see that? That's joy. Little feet... got some shoes. You know, Betty, when I see those little children's faces, wasn't that a pretty little boy? It's just joy. We can give joy.

Betty: We can so easily, James, and these children, not just the fun of seeing their smiles when we give them something like shoes because they've never had them, a lot of them but to know that they're there for a purpose, we're giving them for a purpose and that's to help them avoid diseases that they can get just as we saw, walking around on all the obstacles that are on the ground and keeping them from getting sick.

James: And they do get terrible diseases from hookworms. It gets into their intestines and into their little brains and it is just destructive.

We want to ask you to dial the telephone number there, and we know we're going to be talking about Christmas way ahead of time but we want to get the shoes and yes, provide the surgery for Christmas smiles to do the cleft palate surgeries where we can. We want to ask you to begin right now making it possible.

We have already found 200,000 children located where the missionaries have a heart to help them and to see the healing come not only to their lives and their communities but to their bodies.

So would you please dial that number? Take your bankcard; would you make a gift? The shoes are \$3.60 apiece; \$36 we've got ten pair of shoes. You may be able to give hundreds of pairs of shoes. You make a very special gift, whatever you can do; you make the best gift you can.

We're sending you a beautiful Christmas ornament for those of you who will make a gift of \$100 or more that is actually a little shoe. It's beautiful! And you put it on the

tree and I promise you this, you're going to be thinking about all of the children that you are able to help because of the love of God that was expressed through your gift. We want to send you also a book our son wrote, this is the first book that Randy has written that has been published, *God Wants You to be Happy; Discovering Deeper Joy than You Ever Imagined*.

Our son is a gifted teacher. He has always been an awesome student and he is a great communicator but he is also a gifted writer. What amazed us and everybody that's read the book is the incredible gift to communicate and teach the truth from God's Word. It reminds me in many ways of Beth Moore. Sometimes I say my goodness! This is amazing to me that you can experience joy even as you read the book, which we'll send for any gift that you make to help us give the shoes and the smiles.

If you can make a gift of \$1,000 or more, we have a special art piece, a collectible that I know you're going to treasure. We want to send it to you to say thank you. You can go online *LifeToday.org* and make your gift.

But would you please, would you dial that number right now and let us know what God has impressed you to do? Even if you write a check, make it to *LIFE* but call us and tell us what you're sending. Thank you so much for doing it!

Begin video clip:

Announcer: Poverty is a killer and because of it children needlessly suffer, not only from a lack of food and clean water, but also from a lack of things we take for granted such as a healthy smile or a simple pair of shoes. For most of these children, they've never owned a new pair of shoes and while that may seem minor in light of all their needs, walking with bare feet puts them at risk of life-threatening infections that could lead to crippling consequences, disease, and even death.

By responding today, you can help *LIFE* immediately secure and begin shipping Christmas shoes to 200,000 children around the world just in time for the holidays. Your gift of \$36 will provide ten pairs of shoes. A gift of \$72 will provide 20 pair and a gift of \$144 will help provide 40 pairs of Christmas shoes for children in need.

In appreciation of your gift, be sure to request the inspirational new book, *God Wants You to be Happy* by James and Betty's son, Randy Robison.

With your gift of \$100 to help provide 28 pairs of shoes, you may request this beautifully crafted shoe ornament to place on your tree each Christmas.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help provide two children with corrective cleft palate surgeries and you may request "The Lion and the Lamb" bronze sculpture.

Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

End of clip

In the studio:

James: From the bottom of my heart I want to thank you for helping us. Please do all you can to provide the shoes. There's Jefferson's web site.

Now I wasn't just trying to be nice when I said that's been on my heart about the inner city. Dr. Tony Evans here will tell you how much I've tried to work with him in the inner city. He knows my heart. Boy, I love him. I love all these churches trying to reach out... Tim Keller. As a matter of fact, he just had to cancel being here because he had a conflict; he was coming. We love these people.

Listen to me, you want to know how to communicate, there's his web site. Check it out and be praying for him. Join Betty and me in saying thanks again.

Jefferson: Thank you so much!