

One

COFFEEHOUSE SHOWDOWN

*Late September
Opal School of Religion
Dallas, TX*

THE AUDITORIUM was packed. Hundreds of students, faculty, and donors turned out for the humanitarian dinner, and Dr. William Peterson, professor emeritus at Opal School of Religion, was about to deliver the keynote. He walked onstage to hearty applause, spread his notes on the lectern, and made eye contact with friends.

“Thank you for that very gracious welcome. Honestly, the students who organized this event deserve all the recognition,



and I'll be asking one of them to join me up here in just a moment. First, let me highlight an important upcoming event here at the school of religion.

“We're pleased to announce an exciting new lecture series entitled ‘The Historical Christ: Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up.’ Beginning October 8, right here in Wesley Auditorium, three professors—including two of our own—will be exploring and debating the historicity of Jesus Christ. This is something you won't want to miss.”

Nick, sitting at a front table, nodded at his friend and instructor, Jamal Washington. Jamal would be one of those speakers, and Nick couldn't wait.

Dr. Peterson went on to recognize several teams of students who spent their summer months working with orphans and refugees in Majority World countries. Then, turning to his right, he invited one of them, Jessica Friesen, to join him at the podium and describe this year's student-led humanitarian campaign. Nick's heart pounded as Jessica crossed the stage. She looked *stunning*. He noted how long her hair looked when she wore it down, and how fit she looked, probably from her marathon training. *If only I'd acted differently she might still be interested in me*, he mused. *Maybe I should have . . . huh?* His friend Jared was shoving a note under his elbow. He unfolded it and read, “Hey—close your mouth, chump!”

Nick smiled at him, and then turned back toward Jessica. She had been completely transformed since coming to

faith in Christ five months ago. All she ever talked about was Jesus. No more getting wasted with the girls at the bars on McKinney and Lower Greenville. She even turned him down one night when he asked her out for Tex-Mex. What was that about? She *loved* Tex-Mex. Nick was offended because her rejection seemed personal. Although she expressed genuine gratitude for his influence in leading her to trust Christ, the more she grew in her relationship with God, the less time she made for her relationship with him.

Then again, she *was* busy. Between her nineteen credit hours, leading the Sudan project for girls, and training for the marathon, the only time he saw her was at the weekly *I am Second* campus Bible study. He shook his head. Months ago he was the one resisting a romantic relationship because of her disinterest in Christianity. Now she was avoiding him! It just didn't make sense.

Jessica closed with a story about the Opal students who had traveled to Sudan during the summer. The audience was moved by her emotional appeal and responded with a round of applause and cheering as she returned to her seat.

Throughout Dr. Peterson's lecture Nick glanced at Jessica and reflected on their times together. At one point, her eyes met his and she smiled before quickly looking back at Professor Peterson. She seemed to be moving on, and Nick felt convicted that he should be thinking more about the children in Sudan.

Two

JESUS CHANGING ROCK STARS

IT WAS TUESDAY NIGHT and two hundred students were packed into McCulloch Coffee House for the weekly *I am Second* Bible study. Following a strong set of worship songs from the band, Nick mounted the stage while everyone else found seats. He wore a black T-shirt with bold white letters proclaiming *I am Second*. Grabbing the microphone he spoke with clarity and confidence. “*I am second, and so are you! We’re second because*

Jesus Christ is first!” At these simple words the students broke out in applause. One thing was for certain—this group didn’t lack for enthusiasm.

Nick continued, “Before we show this



week's video, I'm going to read you one of the all-time greatest descriptions of Jesus Christ ever written. It's from the apostle Paul's letter to the Colossians."

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.¹

As soon as Nick finished reading, Jessica stepped onstage and led the students in a prayer. On her "amen," the lights dimmed and the *I am Second* video began. Nick was pumped. *This powerful story was bound to get some feedback!*

The video kicked off with eerie music in a totally dark room. A weird light shone over a white chair, and the voice of Brian "Head" Welch, former lead guitarist for the band Korn, came from off camera. Then he was sitting in the chair,

surrounded by darkness, and covered with tattoos—including a tattoo of a small cross outside his right eye. The students were silent as Welch told his story with great sincerity.

“There was a few times where life seemed good. My daughter Jenna came into the world and it was just such a euphoric feeling. I thought my life could just feel like that forever. I thought I was ‘spiritual,’ but I couldn’t stay sober. I hit rock bottom. I’d sworn that I would never do methamphetamines again because I saw what it did to my child’s mother. It just took my wife’s feelings away and made her leave her kid. I just wanted my wife dead. I wanted to kill her. I thought she was the scum of the earth. How could she do drugs like that and let the drugs win her like that? So I was never going to do meth again.

“I ended up with an everyday crippling addiction to methamphetamine and everything that I said about my ex-wife came true for me. I sunk to the lowest gutter I could ever think of. I would spend time with my kid and I would still be on it because I needed it to function. I would get up in the morning and have a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and

snort meth and then take her to school. I was a junkie. My life was just spinning out of control. Jenna had come out on one of the tours. I just remember her skipping around singing one of our Korn songs called 'A.D.I.D.A.S.' 'All Day I Dream About Sex.' And I'm going like, 'What am I doing? I'm a junkie, my daughter is singing all day I dream about sex, and I'm going to die.'

"My real estate broker, Eric, said, 'Brian, I don't mean to be weird with you, I hope you don't take this the wrong way, but I felt the Scripture jump out at me. I've never done this before so I don't really know how to do this, but I felt like this would mean something to you. It's Matthew 11:28. Jesus says, "Come to me all who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest."'"

"I remember, all tweaked out, looking up in the dictionary 'weary.' I looked up 'burdened' and I pulled the Scripture apart. I admitted, 'I'm wearied and burdened and I need rest for my soul.' I didn't know if it was real, but they invited me to church a couple weeks later and I said a prayer to receive Christ at the church but I went home just like

I used to do. I neglected my daughter, got it all smooth and powdery. But before I took it, I prayed, 'Jesus, You gotta take these drugs from me. Search me right now. Search my heart.'

"Something happened. I felt so much fatherly love from heaven and it was like 'I don't condemn you. I love you. I love you.' It was just love and instantly that love from God came into me. It was so powerful that the next day I threw away all my drugs and I quit Korn. I said, 'I'm quitting Korn and I'm going to raise my kid the right way.' I got the love from God coming into me and then it came out of me to my kid. It changed me. My heart was changed and I said to my daughter, 'Jenna, Daddy's going to be home with you all the time. I'm quitting my career.' And her face lit up and she was like, 'for me?' She felt so special and God used her to save me . . . to save her life later on."²

Nick returned to the stage as the lights came back up. He had a small leather Bible in his hand and chose his words carefully. "Maybe you too feel weary and burdened. If we're all willing to be honest, most of us have felt wearied.

Last year, at least for me, it was late nights, hangovers, and some serious confusion about my life. Even now I struggle between having fun and doing well in school . . . not to mention that I'm totally addicted to caffeine. Every student knows what it's like to be burdened, and to carry heavy loads. If that's you right now, here's something you should know. You don't have to figure it all out before coming to Jesus.

“Maybe you can relate to Brian Welch. Meth is a tough master. But so is drinking too much, or doing *anything* too much. You heard what he said about how to gain your freedom.

“Or maybe you watched that entire video and thought, ‘I may not be perfect, but I don't have *any* problems like *that* guy had. I'm a good person living a good life and I'm good with God. Why surrender my life to Jesus?’

“Let me ask you a couple of questions. Have you ever told a lie?” Nick smiled. “Yeah, me too. The trouble is, that makes you and me *liars*. Have you ever had lust in your heart? How about your eyes—ever looked with lust at someone? Jesus said that anyone who lusts has committed adultery in his heart. Before I came to Jesus last year I looked at pornography all the time. Believe me, I know what it's like to get wasted and treat girls disrespectfully. How about this—have you ever hated anyone? Jesus said anyone who hates his brother or sister has committed murder in his

heart. That makes every one of us a lying, adulterous murderer. You can check all this out in the gospel of Matthew, chapter five.

“We’ve all done lots of good things, and most of us live with the best of intentions. But compared to the infinite goodness and holiness of a Perfect Being, our best actions will never measure up. There’s only one way to be good enough to stand before a holy God. You have to let Him forgive you. Today can be the day you receive Christ. He paid for your sin with His death. Accept that gift and make Him first in your life.

“Now is the perfect time to make a decision about Jesus. We’re not promised tomorrow. Let’s suppose hypothetically that you leave here tonight and get hit by a drunk driver. As you stand before God to give an account of your life, will you stand guilty . . . or innocent? Do you think you would go to heaven . . . or hell? If you don’t know Jesus, I encourage you to talk with Him right now. Confess your sin, accept His forgiveness, and give Him control over your life. He died in your place and will forgive you and cleanse you of all of your sin!”