

AMAZING JESUS
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BACKGROUND SLIDE #1: I was ten-years-old and my football hero—Johnny Unitas—was in town. The world champion Baltimore Colts were in Dallas to play the season’s first exhibition game against the brand-new, first-year Dallas Cowboys.

Mom said, “I read that the Colts were staying at the Ramada Inn by the airport. Would you like to drive over and see if we might see some of the Colts?” Would I!

It was kind of like Zacchaeus climbing the sycamore in hopes of seeing Jesus.

Maybe I would see.....Johnny Unitas....Talk about longing to see Johnny.

SLIDE #2: Then, out of restaurant came Johnny U. Heart stopped.

He turned toward the sycamore tree.

I rolled down the window. I was talking to Johnny Unitas.

Only eight months earlier Johnny U (that is what we all called him) quarterbacked the Colts to victory in overtime over the NY Giants in what is called, the “greatest game ever played.”

“Are you going to the game tonight?”

“Am I going! Dad bought tickets on the 45 yard line!”

Both teams looked sloppy in the first exhibition game of the season. Johnny U only played the first quarter. Near the end of the game Dallas was ahead 10-7 and it looked as if the Colts were going to lose! I was shattered!

Then, they sent in Johnny. I remember a short pass to Number 24 Lenny More gained about 15 yards to the fifty. The colts lined up right in front of us. Johnny handed off to number 45, L.G. Dupree. We called him “Long Gone.” There it was, I saw it all. He was through the line, past the line backers, through the secondary. I was on my feet: “Go, Long Gone, Go!” and he did. All the way to the end zone. Final score: Colts 14, Cowboys 10.

And Johnny Unitas is standing at the car window talking to me.

The just-opened Topps bubble-gum, football-card wrapper was in my lap. On top was my first Johnny Unitas football card of the season.

“I just got your card!”

“Really, I haven’t seen it yet. I had a big cut on my nose from a helmet crunch when they took the picture.

Let me see it—

SLIDE #3: Sure enough, if you look closely, you can see the 1 inch gash oozing across the bridge of his nose.

I did not save any #25 Long-Gone Dupree, or #24 Lenny Moore cards,

SLIDE #4: But I saved a lot of Johnny U cards.

I did not save any other Colt’s cards—No Alan Amache—Gino Marchetti—Art Donovan—Raymond Berry—or Buzz Nutter cards

SLIDE #5: But I saved a lot of Johnny U cards.

I did not save any—Peyton Manning, Troy Aikman, Tony Romo, or Joe Montana cards.

SLIDE #6: But I saved a lot of Johnny U cards.

I was so excited that I could hardly wait to get home and tell all my friends—Mark Russ, and Bruce and Steve Thompson, and Tom Grey, and Mike Everett—but the only one I could find home was Bill Austin—and I didn't even like him...But, I told him any way.

I am a Johnny U fan forever. When he died last year, I grieved.
What he did for me—took time for me, talked with me, looked at his card with me—I will never get over that amazing moment.

SLIDE #7: Have you ever wondered what it might be like to meet God face to face?
You're in your sycamore tree when Jesus comes out of the restaurant and He is talking with you.

I was just seven when I had my first amazing encounter with Jesus.
For me it happed in church—for some of you, it may happen this morning in this church.

Looking back, I realize that my encounter with the amazing Jesus set my paradigm for life.
Values, decisions, perspectives and expectations—life itself—took on an entirely different point of view—and it is all for the best!

SWITCH TO ROGER'S COMPUTER

SLIDE OVERHEAD #8: Like a skeleton: gives a framework to life.

Draw dog skeleton...Draw human skeleton and put flesh on the skeleton.

Draw a structure less blob;

Draw a misshapen human skeleton to represent fallen man and woman.

Draw a normal skeleton to represent the restored life of Christ.

Call this "abundant life."

SWITCH BACK TO TECH'S COMPUTER

SLIDE #9: In John 10:9-10 Jesus declared His intention for us: "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

Let's experience the moments three people whose lives were changed forever—for the best—the moment they experienced the amazing Lord Jesus.

SLIDE #10: ● JESUS AMAZED PEOPLE WITH DIVINE ACCEPTANCE.

12:00 noon and Jesus sits on a well hot, tired and thirsty.

SLIDE #11: John 4:7-9: When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"

And with that He shattered her mind with divine acceptance!

The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Tremendous racial barrier here – Samaritans were half-breeds – Jews who had intermarried with Gentiles – and Jews hated them for that.

Unwritten law that men didn't speak with women in public.

He was a rabbi and religious leaders didn't hold conversations with prostitutes.

SLIDE #12: John 4:16-18: He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." "I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. 18 The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband."

Most women came to the well in the cool of the evening. The reason she's there alone at noon is because of her reputation. She had a sordid sex life and 5 marriage failures.

Most of the ladies in town wouldn't touch her with a ten foot pole. Neither would some of you.

Imagine the rejection.

5 men rejected her.

Imagine you have been through 5 divorces.

Humiliated by friends

SWITCH TO ROGER'S COMPUTER

OVERHEAD SLIDE #13: Computer game rejection

Let's face it; none of us like to be rejected and alone.

Let's face it—some of us are left out and it really hurts.

SWITCH BACK TO TECH'S COMPUTER

She says, "Well, this is all very confusing. But one of these days God will show up and He'll clear this up!" "If I could just talk to God, if I could just meet God...take care of my hurts and pains of rejection!"

Now watch the ultimate shock in verse 26 Christ makes a most startling revelation. Are you ready for this?

SLIDE #14: John 4:26: Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."

Here she's been looking for the Messiah and she's speaking to Him!

Johnny Unitas is leaning through her car window and taking time for her. He is not rejecting her. He is accepting and valuing her!

SLIDE #15: John 4:28-29: Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 29 "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"

Ah, here's an experience that causes a woman to leave her dishes in the sink.

As this revelation begins to sink in, she literally leaves her water pots and runs into town to tell men about the man who's told her all about herself.

SLIDE #16: John 4:39: Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." 4

Jesus Christ isn't too particular about the people He deals with.
Jesus accepted an excluded, ostracized woman. She was unlovely to most. But not to Jesus.

SLIDE #17: Human love says, "I love you because I like what you are."
Divine love says, "I love you. I don't care what you are."
Human love says, "I love you... I love you... but you I can take later."
Divine love splatters on everything that gets in its way.

This morning God is splattering His divine love all over you.
Imagine Jesus having a long conversation with you.
You realize he is Messiah. Him you can trust.

● SLIDE #18: JESUS AMAZED PEOPLE BY COMFORTING THEM IN THEIR PAINS.

Jesus arrived at Lazarus' funeral four days late to find his family and friends still mourning Lazarus' untimely demise.

● SLIDE #19: John 11:19 and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother.

● SLIDE #20: John 11:32-36: When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet ... When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled....

As He looked around at the grief and suffering—Jesus wept.
Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

John 11:45: Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him.

What does it do to your heart to know that in your moments of deepest despair the God of Heaven is weeping with you?

You have hurts. Think of one.

Sense for a moment that Jesus has His arm around you and is weeping with you.

● SLIDE #21: Anthony Campolo tells of a pastor friend who made an arrangement with some of the local undertakers to take the funerals nobody else would take.

Early one Tuesday morning the undertaker down the street told me he needed somebody to conduct a funeral for a man who had died of AIDS. None of the other ministers wanted to have anything to do with this funeral because of that - and also because there was every indication that all the people who would be attending the funeral would be homosexual."

About thirty homosexual men showed up. As I read Scripture, prayed, and spoke, they never once looked up at me. Their heads were bowed. They stared at the floor. They seemed to be afraid of making eye contact with me. I ended up speaking to the tops of their heads.

"When the service was over, we followed the hearse out to the cemetery. They stood on one side of the grave, and I stood on the other as the casket was lowered down.

"

As I spoke to these men, they stood like statues. They had dazed expressions in their eyes and seemed to be focused on nothing. They just stood there, without a nerve or a sinew moving.

"After the benediction, I motioned to leave, but none of them moved. I turned back and asked, 'Is there anything more I can do for you?'"

"One answered, 'Yeah! They usually read the Twenty-third Psalm at these things. You didn't read the Twenty-third Psalm, pastor. Would you mind reading it?'"

"And so I read the Twenty-third Psalm to them.

Then another of the men said, 'There's something that Jesus said about the Spirit of God blowing and landing anywhere. Could you read that part of the Bible to me?'"

"Then one of them said, 'Pastor! There's a part of the Bible that I really like. It's about how nothing can separate us from the love of God. Do you know what part I'm taking about?'"

I opened my Bible to Romans 8 and read to them, 'Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'"

As those men hungrily listened to the words that told them that there was nothing - NOTHING - that could separate them from the love of God, I hurt, because I realized that these men were hungering for God, but they would never set foot inside a church. They were convinced that church people despised them. But God never does—for God so loved the whole world—the world is full of people that God will never stop loving! His heart grieves for them. He longs for them to experience His life.

God knows your hurts. He longs for you to enter into His life.

Think of one of your hurts and pains. Imagine Jesus putting His arms around you and weeping for you in your pains. Do you sense His compassion—for you? He loves you. He is spattering His compassion all over you.

SLIDE #22: JESUS AMAZED PEOPLE BY SUPPORTING THEM IN THEIR STRUGGLES.

The disciples were amazed when Jesus awakened from deep sleep to calm the storm swamping their boat. As they recognized His deity, they placed their faith in Him.

SLIDE #23: Matthew 8:24-25: Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. 25 The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"

SLIDE #24: Matthew 8:26-27: He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

Sometimes we don't need to prove Jesus to people—we just let them see Jesus.

SLIDE #25: Two weeks ago, with two runners on base and a strike against her, senior Sara Tucholsky of Western Oregon University did something she had never done in high school or college. Her first home run cleared the fence.

In her excitement she missed first base, started back to tag it and collapsed with a knee injury. She crawled back to first but could do no more. The first-base umpire said that Sara would be called out if her teammates tried to help her. Or, the umpire said, a pinch runner could be called in, and the homer would count as a single.

Then Central Washington first baseman Mallory Holtman, the career home run leader in the Great Northwest Athletic Conference, asked the umpire if she and her teammates could help Tucholsky. The umpire said there was no rule against it.

● SLIDE #26: So Mallory Holtman and shortstop Liz Wallace put their arms under Tucholsky's legs, and she put her arms over their shoulders. The three headed around the bases, stopping to let Tucholsky touch each base with her good leg.

Tucholsky's home run sent Western Oregon to a 4-2 victory, ending Central Washington's chances of winning the conference and advancing to the playoffs.

"The only thing I remember is that Mallory asked me which leg was the one that hurt," Tucholsky said. "I told her it was my right leg and she said, 'OK, we're going to drop you down gently and you need to touch it with your left leg,' and I said 'OK, thank you very much.'"

"She said, 'You deserve it, you hit it over the fence,' and we all kind of just laughed."

Central Washington coach Gary Frederick, a 14-year coaching veteran, called the act of sportsmanship "unbelievable."

"In the end, it is not about winning and losing so much," first basewoman Holtman said.

"It was about this girl. She hit it over the fence and was in pain, and she deserved a home run."

Jesus longs for us to hit a home run: "I came that you might experience abundant life."

You're the one with the blown-out knee. Jesus is the first baseman!

This is our condition. We see it in our hurt, loneliness and pain.

Why return to first base? God's created us to hit a home run.

I can crawl back to first base and get a pinch runner—Or Jesus says, "You can do life with me. I have a whole new way to run the bases!"

We are created to do life this way—to touch all the bases.

● SLIDE #27: "Religion is a Crutch!"

No stretcher! I can't limp into Heaven; I need someone to carry me around the bases.

Jesus says, "Will you trust me to carry you? Margret now says, "I need someone to carry me."

Can you trust Jesus with your rejection, problems, and pains? Once you trust Him with some areas of life, don't stop there. Turn your whole life over to Him.

Move into a new paradigm called "Abundant Life. Rearrange your life around a new concept.

Maybe you sitting here and just felt his acceptance, comfort and/or support. I want you to understand that this invitation is especially directed at you!

To the disciples Christ became everything—their entire life.

As I've grown up I have put away my Johnny Unitas cards.

● SLIDE #28: I keep multiple pictures of Jesus in my heart.

I have put away my pictures of Johnny U throwing touchdown passes.

● SLIDE #29: I now keep pictures of Jesus supporting people in their struggles

I no longer cherish pictures of Johnny fighting to beat down the opposition.

● SLIDE #30: I have multiple pictures of Jesus reaching out in acceptance to the despised and rejected.

I no longer cherish pictures of Johnny in triumphant victory poses.

● SLIDE #31: I have multiple pictures of Jesus in loving compassion ministering to the hurts, griefs and pains of despairing people all around the world.

I am no longer trying to be like Johnny Unitas.

● SLIDE #32: Now, I want to be like Jesus.

VIDEO: THE AMAZING JESUS

Woman at the well only went to draw water but she came away with Jesus.

You can go away with Him today, if you'll surrender your life now to Him.

I will invite Margret to enter into a personal relationship with the amazing Jesus.