Jesus in the House

When high school friends Joshua Swenson and Chad Johnson came to JBU in the fall of 1993, they made a commitment together to be intentional in their faith. Little did they know that their decision would have an impact not only on their own walk with Christ, but on the spiritual life of many of their fellow students as well. “In the months leading up to our arrival at JBU, Chad and I began to talk about our desire to be passionate about our relationship with God. It was in the midst of those conversations that we decided that upon our arrival at JBU we would commit to getting together every day to pray,” says Swenson. So, at each night at 11:00 p.m. they did just that. Over the course of the semester, they were joined by a growing number of friends, eventually moving to other areas of J. Alvin as the group increased in size.

The next school year, Swenson and Johnson decided to invite any interested students to join them for a weekly prayer time, which they named “Jesus in the House”. Whenever it was time for a meeting to start, Swenson and Johnson armed themselves with leftovers from their job at a local Pizza Hut and set out to alert their fellow residents. “Chad and I would get home from work and start walking around J-Alvin calling out ‘Jesus in the House!’ and ‘free pizza!’ and people would come running…what started out as simply praying turned into an unsanctioned worship/Bible study once a week in the J-Alvin study lounge,” recalls Swenson.

As word about the Bible study spread, Mayfield RA Andrea Avvento and fellow student Allie Arana decided to start a separate group for JBU women. They met in the basement of Mayfield and joined the guys’ group during J. Alvin open dorm on Tuesday nights. At the height of its activity, Jesus in the House had nearly 300 attendants gathering in the main lobby of J. Alvin, prompting Campus Ministries to organize it into an official campus ministry. Students prayed, studied Scripture and worshipped together weekly. The ministry grew as they occasionally invited speakers to share during the meetings, organized fasting and prayer chains and shared the Gospel on the streets of downtown Fayetteville. A Spanish-language version of Jesus in the House was added in 1999. The ministry wound down over time and eventually ceased its activity by the early 2000s.
Until men and women know the rest of heart goodness…they will never be able to deal with the unrest of a sin-cursed world through a service which heads up in positive righteousness….Before we can live “soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world,” we must first “deny ungodliness and worldly lust.” Before we can “take up the cross and follow” Jesus Christ, we must first “deny ourselves”-dying upon the cross, to be dead to the world, with its enticements and lusts. Before we can know the wonders of a service which is the outflow of the invitation, “Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me,” we must first understand the significance, and the possibility and necessity of “come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.”

In other words, we must first “Come” before we can “Go”, and we must first “Be” before we can “Do”. Too many people play with Christianity, assuming some of its obligations and seeking to be identified with its functions, ready always to pass through some of its forms and ceremonies, without ever coming into vital contact with Jesus Christ, or without ever knowing, in the least measure, the power of His Spirit. Until men and women know the rest of heart goodness…they will never be able to deal with the unrest of a sin-cursed world through a service which heads up in positive righteousness….Before we can live “soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world,” we must first “deny ungodliness and worldly lust.” Before we can “take up the cross and follow” Jesus Christ, we must first “deny ourselves”-dying upon the cross, to be dead to the world, with its enticements and lusts. Before we can know the wonders of a service which is the outflow of the invitation, “Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me,” we must first understand the significance, and the possibility and necessity of “come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.”

Excerpt from “A Great Woman”