

Across the Table from Jesus

By: Gary Black

I'll never forget the moment. Following my usual, hectic work day of doing all kinds of things, I paused to meditate and pray. In the process, the Lord gave me a mental picture of a huge room with a long narrow table centered on the concrete floor. Jesus and I sat at opposite ends, some 15 or 20 feet apart.

He was speaking. I was listening and taking notes... lots of notes! His words seemed very formal, like words from a college philosophy professor. Of course, I wrote furiously. I thought, "If I get this all on paper, I'll know exactly how to live, and then I'll be pleasing to God!" What an opportunity," I thought, "to take notes on a lecture from Jesus."

Somewhere during the course of the "lecture", he made a suggestion. "Friend, why don't you move around to the side of the table so we can be closer." Quite reluctantly and awkwardly, I moved, seating myself maybe two or three feet away.

I was immediately struck by how much better I could hear when I moved closer to Jesus. I also noticed something else... being near Him was more exciting than taking notes. I saw things I hadn't seen before – a tenderness mingled with joy that made His eyes dance as He talked. A calm confidence etched into every line in His face. Peace washed over me as I watched and listened. As time passed, I noticed that I was writing less and listening more. I was feeling more too.

I realized that when Jesus talked about sad things, I felt sad. When he talked about joyful things, I found myself chuckling! It felt odd at first, laughing in the presence of Jesus, but after awhile, it felt... well.. normal. In fact, I realized that He has tremendous sense of humor. I'd never known that.

So I took fewer notes and listened even more. Occasionally, He'd reach out and touch my arm or hand as we talked. At first, I was very uncomfortable with that, but after awhile, it was okay. Eventually, I stopped taking notes altogether. In fact, I put my pen in my pocket and pushed the notepad aside. Now, just being near Him overshadowed any interest I had in note taking. I was totally captivated by His presence.. His tenderness.. How approachable he was.

When we'd been at opposite ends of the table, I hadn't really believed that He was particularly interested in me. Now it seemed that, as we talked, He never took His eyes off me. I felt as if I were the most important person in the world. I must confess... I felt terribly unworthy, yet incredibly encouraged by such love.

I also realized that He was an incredible listener. When I said something, He listened with His whole body. He'd lean forward, eagerly anticipating every word. At least, that's how it felt. Even when I said things that were silly, He never ridiculed or corrected me. It didn't seem to be part of His character to belittle me or anyone else.

I felt indescribable peace. I remember thinking, "I can't believe He loves me this much. I matter to Him. I really do! He genuinely cares, not just about what I do or say, but about who I am."

Well, the whole experience lasted just a short while, and it was over. But I will never forget it. Until that day... that moment... I hadn't known the previously unfathomable love of God. Not until that day... when I sat... across the table.. from Jesus.