OG Pastors: Faith Over a Lifetime

Episode 2 — Dave White

Full Transcript

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Host: Stewart Foley (That Texas Pod-Vangelist)

Guest: Dave White — Elder at Hill Country Church, financial advisor, long-time Bible teacher

TRANSCRIPT

Host: A lot of people talk about faith, but what does that actually look like over a lifetime? I'm Stewart Foley and this is "OG Pastors: Faith Over a Lifetime" podcast.

Hey, welcome back! This is Episode 2 of "OG Pastors: Faith Over a Lifetime". My name is Stew. I'm also known as that Texas Pod-Vangelist, and I'll be your host. We're planning on a 10-episode Season 1, and this show is pretty simple.

We sit down with men and women who have spent decades walking with Jesus and ask what they've learned along the way. Not just what they believe, but also what faith has actually looked like through family, work, success, disappointment, uncertainty, doubt, and all the twists and turns that make up a life, right? And so, because wisdom isn't built in a moment, it's built over a lifetime.

And people like our guest have helped me tremendously and I've benefited so much, and the idea is that we want to share that wisdom with everyone, right? Our goal is to reach as many people as we possibly can.

So, if you enjoy these conversations we have, a couple of things we'd love for you to do for us if you would. First, it's super helpful if you'll follow the podcast so you never miss an episode. Secondly, share it with one friend and let us know how we can improve.

We're just getting started and we'd love your feedback. And which leads me to today's guest. Today's guest is Dave White. Dave is a very special person to me and he's a very special person to a lot of people. Dave is an elder at Hill Country Church. He's also a financial advisor, a long-time Bible teacher, and someone who has spent decades investing in people.

He's taught scripture, mentored believers, helped families navigate life's biggest decisions, and quietly built a reputation as a man whose faith matches his words. More importantly, Dave has been one of the people who has greatly influenced my own walk with Christ.

So, when I read your story, Dave, one sentence jumped out at me: "My greatest challenge has been that I didn't fully trust God sooner in my life." I suspect that a lot of people listening can relate to that. I'm really glad you're here. Thanks for taking the time and thanks for being on the show.

Dave White: Thank you, Stew. It's a privilege to be with you and to be a part of this podcast. I'm thrilled, I'm anxious to see what God's going to do with it and I appreciate it so much. Thank you.

Host: And so, let's get started. Where did you grow up? What was your family like? And when did God become real to you?

Dave White: Great, thank you. Well, I grew up in El Paso, Texas, and I jokingly tell people all the time that that's almost in Texas. El Paso is just on the outskirts of nowhere and on the entry point to Juarez, Mexico. So, that's kind of where I grew up.

I grew up there, I was the youngest of six children. There were four boys and the two oldest were girls. And both of my sisters were married and out of the house when I was born.

In fact, my mom and both of my sisters were pregnant at the same time. So, I have a niece that's just younger than I am and a niece that's just older than I am. And that's the kind of environment I grew up in, so my sisters kind of were like surrogate moms to me, to some degree.

I would go and they would be my counselor, they would help me navigate life at a young age and even all the way through high school, I had a wonderful relationship with my sisters.

And growing up as the youngest, you know, sometimes you think you can hide, and that's not the truth. Not in my family, not with my mom. So, that's the environment we grew up in, was in the lower valley of El Paso, Texas, which was primarily Hispanic, and I grew up with my best friends being Hispanic and not knowing that I had some of that in my own heritage growing up, but that's the way it was.

When I was two weeks old, my mom and dad had lived a life before they met each other. They were both married before. They had children before they met each other. So, mom and dad were not Christians. They would have said that they believed in God.

They, like a lot of people, always believed that there was a God somewhere, but He may not have anything to do with them because of the choices that they had made. So, at two weeks old, my mom tells me that she got a knock on the door, the front door in El Paso, and it was a pastor, a local pastor.

And he was just going around visiting new people, trying to gather up new folks for the flock. And as she put it, he presented the gospel to her and she accepted Christ on the doorstep.

Host: Wow.

Dave White: Her life was radically changed, and so was my dad's, as we began to attend church. I never knew anything except going to church, but that was so new to my mom and to the rest of the family and to my dad that it began a new walk for me.

So, I grew up when the church doors were open, I was there. As I grew up, I enjoyed it. I enjoyed the camaraderie, I enjoyed the social aspect of church, I enjoyed the teaching, I enjoyed the preaching. I always accepted the Bible as true, but never really having a personal relationship with Christ.

And that's why I think I've said what I've said, is that I wish I would have started earlier with that real personal connection with God, other than just a social connection that I had, I think.

Host: I can really relate to that. And I have a little inside baseball that I'd throw out there about where you're from, which is — you're not technically from El Paso, right? Is it Isleta?

Dave White: Esleta. Esleta.

Host: Okay, so tell us — this is a really a Texas story. Tell us about Esleta.

Dave White: Okay. Esleta was a little small community, really kind of wrapped — El Paso kind of wrapped around it. And El Paso, I'm sure, in those days, in '55 is when I was born. In those days, I'm sure El Paso was servicing Esleta and wanted to annex them.

So I'm sure it was a tax base issue. Esleta — the people of Esleta were not at all thrilled with Big Brother coming in, El Paso coming in and taking over any of the jurisdiction.

So, in March of 1955, the people of Esleta voted down being annexed into El Paso. In June of 1955, El Paso went ahead and annexed Esleta without them wanting to be.

Host: I don't even know you could do that.

Dave White: I didn't either. And so, it went into court. In fact, from what I understand, it went all the way to the Supreme Court, whether or not Esleta would be annexed into El Paso, and the Supreme Court denied even taking the case.

So, it went back to the lower courts, which meant Esleta was going to be annexed, but I was born in October of '55 and on my birth certificate, the doctor very clearly states that I was born in Esleta, Texas, not in El Paso, and that the clinic where I was born is in Esleta, and that's still a great community in El Paso, but it has been, of course, a great part of El Paso since 1955.

Host: It's interesting — in that story about the change for your mom and dad, I can relate to that. And I think that there's times when your family and friends, when you make that kind of a switch, there can be pushback, right? It's real.

But the other thing that I can relate to is you saying that your greatest challenge was not trusting God more fully earlier. Can you talk a little bit about that? Because it's something that I'm getting there, but it's not like natural for me. I feel vulnerable. Like, what do you mean? But then at the end of the day, you think through it and you go, well, who else you gonna trust, right? So, can you talk a little bit about that whole concept?

Dave White: Right, yes. Thank you. I think that in my life, Stew, the challenge was not, again, not believing that God didn't exist. I believed God existed. I believed that He was who He was. I believed that Jesus was the Christ, the son of the living God, and that He came and died for our sins. I believed all that.

Now my concept of how that was worked out in my life was a bit skewed. And I could blame it on my upbringing, the religious group that I studied under — I could blame it on any of that. And that's not true. That's not the facts.

The facts are I had a misconception. And my misconception was this: that I could finally come to God when I was perfect, and I couldn't come to God until I was perfect. And once I was perfect, God would accept me.

No one taught me that, Stew. That was just my own misconception of who God was. I knew the scripture, I knew the verses that said, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. I got that.

But that didn't mean that I could have a relationship with Him until I could polish the outside, clean up the inside, then God would accept me. And that was a huge misconception on my part because I struggled for years not getting polished enough.

I could never get clean enough for God to accept me. I had to just get to a point where I just said, God, this is it, and it's not pretty.

Host: Yeah, this is it. I can relate to that. The idea that you're not good enough for God, or that you make too many mistakes, or that you've sinned in certain ways that are unforgivable. I'm probably a better expert at what's not in the Bible than what's in it.

And one of the things that I take comfort in is exactly what you're saying — there's not a list of things that, like, if you cut down this tree, you're out. There's nothing like that. It doesn't matter. You just need to accept Christ.

And it's so touching and I think our listeners can relate to that. I think it's super helpful. It's exactly the kind of wisdom I'm hoping for — that this show reaches.

Right. So like you, I always thought that God was real and occasionally we went to church. And there was a person in the front that had a very elaborate robe on and my perception was that that person was struck by lightning at the age of four and decided they were going to become a minister and they knew it from the very beginning and they led a perfect life.

And like you, that was my own misperception — because yours has been a winding road. It's one of the things I love about your story is that it wasn't a straight line. So, you worked in retail shoes, you have sold insurance — those are two tough constructions — Bible college, church ministry, church planting, startups, financial services.

And God was with you through all of it. So can you talk about — when you were living through all this, did it seem like God was directing the path or did it only make sense later when you looked back?

Dave White: That's a great question. I think I believed so much in God as being real, that there were times before I kind of got it, that I would pray and I would see God move in my life. And it was one of those situations where I believe God is either — we're living in the reality of our encounter with Christ, as Lloyd Ogilvie said in his book "Drumbeat of Love" — we're either living in the reality of our encounter with Christ or we're being prepared for that encounter.

And I think as I was being prepared for that encounter where I really kind of got it and gave my life to Christ — it doesn't mean I was perfect after that — but as I was preparing for that, there were times when I would pray and I would see God answer a prayer.

Now there are a lot of people out there and a lot of theologians out there that would say that God never answers a prayer until you're saved. Well, I can tell you that God answered many of my prayers before I was saved, in preparation for me to be saved. So, that's kind of an interesting thought all by itself.

But anyway, there were times when I would hold in my own mind which direction I was going to go in. And to be frank and honest — as we've always been with each other — but to be frank and honest to you and to our viewers, I was arrogant, I was proud, I was self-made. I was all the things that I thought were important that God had put no value in, in my opinion, as I look back on it.

So, there were times when I would tell God what I was going to do. And God would say, that's not the direction for you. And I would push back. Really? Oh, I think that's a good idea for me.

Can you imagine that kind of arrogance in your life — that you would actually come back to God that way? And I can think of a time in the eighth grade when I did that. And I didn't become a full believer until I was a freshman in high school.

But in eighth grade I told God what I was going to do, and if that wasn't what He wanted me to do, then He would have to stop me. And I set some real guidelines for Him stopping me — and I was stopped. I just gotta tell you, I was stopped.

So even before I became a Christian, I can see that God was working in my life. But He had to get through the layers of who I was, which was not pretty. And frankly, to be again open and honest to you and to our viewers, it hasn't been all roses since I accepted Christ. It hasn't been all without challenges, without side steps, without back steps.

But God has shown me that He is God and I'm not. And that's a pretty powerful lesson all by itself.

So through all those things — retail sales and insurance — I remember the turn that my wife and I made towards Bible college was based on a change in life. The insurance business wanted to escalate my position with the company, and I was wondering if that's really what I wanted to do.

So I was praying about it and I said, God, if you really want me to get into ministry more full-time, you're going to have to show me through my wife.

And I didn't explain that to Leslie, I didn't tell her that was even an option. And one night we were lying in bed and Leslie asked a simple question. She said, I want to ask you a question. And my heart began to beat through my chest.

I knew that God was talking to me through my wife. And I said, okay. And she said, have you ever been called to ministry? And are you now called to ministry? And I said, yes, I think I am, and you just confirmed it in your question.

Wow. And so we prepared to go to Colorado Springs and go to Bible college at that point. And that completely changed the direction of my life vocationally. So I went to Bible college, I got degrees in Biblical studies and Christian education, and we moved to Oregon to start a new church.

And then of course we had the interruption of some things that happened about five or six years later that took me out of full-time ministry as far as like a paid pastor.

And yet God has led me into what I consider full-time ministry without being a vocational pastor. I work outside the church for my living, but I want to serve God's people and people that are seeking God all the time. So that's kind of the route that I took — a twist and a turn.

Host: That's amazing. You know, these pauses never occurred on the industry podcast I've done. But a lot of that really makes me think. I look back at my own life and I'm like, there is no way that that happened without God making it happen. Like there's just no way. And it's happened over and over again.

And from my seat it looks like you're pretty full-time at this. It sure looks like it. I mean, I'm inspired by your work. So let's talk about work just a little bit.

You've spent decades helping people think about money, family, security, and the future. What has that taught you about people? And I think this is true not only of you, but of others that have a similar pursuit — in your ministry you see people at their best: weddings, graduations, celebrations. And at their worst. And there's a lot of worsts.

What have you learned — kind of what's held up over time? If you're 25, what could you share with someone from all that time?

Dave White: That's a wonderful question. I have often thought if I could go back and talk to myself, what would I say? And I think if I could go back or speak to someone that is 25 and seeking God in any way, I would say trust without reservation and lean not on your own strength, your own ability, your own way of pulling it off.

God's gifted us all in very special ways. And that's a beautiful thing. We all have special gifts, we have some abilities to communicate, to talk to the people that are closest to us, our families, our friends.

But in all that, it can't be about me. It's gotta be about Him. And I think if I could have turned that corner sooner, Stew, in my life — that it wasn't about trying to impress somebody at a 40th high school reunion or a 50th high school reunion because they need to see that I'm some kind of special. Look what I've accomplished. It means nothing to me now.

And as you look back — years ago the Gallup poll asked people over the age of 90 what they would do differently if they could live life all over again. And the number one answer was "I would have taken more risks in life." And for people over the age of 90, that's pretty substantial.

And I think the biggest risk that I had to take was releasing my future from myself into God's hands. And that was a risk that at one point I don't know that I was really willing to take. But as time goes on, it's more fulfilled in my life that I can really turn my life over to Christ.

So that's what I would say — don't depend on yourself or even your own abilities. God's gifted you well. Champion that, but understand that it's not about you, it's about Him.

Host: It is so — you know, a lot of this really hits home. I think it's such great advice. It is interesting that at 90 folks are saying they wish they would have taken more risk. I think oftentimes we're fearful of the unknown. And it requires faith and trust in Jesus to really get it.

And the other thing too is — and I'm sure you've experienced this — where what you're being called to do is not easy. And you talked about it earlier — it's like in the Bible it doesn't say you won't have challenges, it says I'll be there with you.

So, you've been a part of the conversations about OG Pastors and this show from the very beginning. I came to you with this and I said I feel like I'm being called here. And at least for me, I pray that I want to do God's work in the best way that I can. I'm not concerned about what that is, I'm just saying — here, you take the steering wheel for a while.

I mean, I've been driving like this for a long time, and I think you're a lot better at it than me based on a few data points. But at this stage of your life, why do you think conversations like this matter? Why does wisdom — you and I both go to a Bible study led by Bill Counts who's 92. I get so much out of that. It's not just a Bible study, it's Bill. Why do you think that wisdom from folks who have been walking with Christ a long time matters?

Dave White: Yeah, I agree. I think attending that Bible study — I wouldn't want to ever miss that study, for that wisdom and for the insight, the experience that he's had, the knowledge that he has, all those things tied together. And it feeds me.

It encourages me to be more dependent on God, to understand what He's saying in my life at a real deep level. I think those kind of conversations or experiences help us to really self-reflect — in a sense, who are we in this story?

And it's interesting because the Bible clearly states in the Old Testament, Jesus said through the prophet Jeremiah, "I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you."

And I think — how do I fit into His plan? And so a part of that wisdom is helping me to understand that He does, first, have a plan for my life, which frankly I sort of believed and didn't really know what that looked like for a long, long time.

And not only does He have a plan, but how do I begin to fit into it? And I fit into it not by polishing the outside, cleaning up the inside, but just by presenting myself as a living sacrifice in His care and letting Him be God and I don't have to be.

And that's pretty special — that's pretty relieving to me.

Host: That relief — I can relate to that too. So let's talk a little bit about legacy. You're now watching your granddaughter Clara — and just to say this, I've been fortunate to meet some members of your family. Your granddaughter Clara just graduated from Colorado Christian, you just had another graduation in your family, you've got a great-grandchild on the way, you've had an opportunity to watch multiple generations of your family grow. What is this season of life like for you right now?

Dave White: Oh, that's wonderful. It's probably the most — in some ways, Stew — the most enjoyable time of my life and yet the most challenging time of my life. And let me explain that challenge.

The challenge is not a challenge in a bad or difficult way. It is just a challenge to be the grandfather that I always dreamed to be and never had in my life. And what that means is I'm challenged to spend more time on my knees for my kids and my grandkids.

And as they make their choices through life — and some of them are the ones that I would make for them if I could, and some of them are the ones that I wouldn't make for them if I could — but they're their challenges, their decisions.

But in the midst of that, if I could just be one of the people that they would come to and say, I have this on my plate, I have a question about life in this way — and desire to gain some wisdom.

I don't know that I have it, but I know where to go to get it, and that's to God Himself and to the scriptures. And so it's the most wonderful time of life, but it in some ways reminds me that I have a deep, deep responsibility to those that God has put in my life, to just love them and to love them like Jesus would. And let them love me back, and let their love reflect the love of Christ in my life.

Host: Wow. That, I tell you what — Episode 3's going to be tough to top this one. When you look back now, what's mattered? What's actually mattered? And what has mattered less than you thought it would?

Dave White: I think what has mattered is grace. The gift that God gives us. That's mattered. What hasn't mattered are the rules. The rules that I thought were important, Stew, growing up: "Do this and everything's going to be good. Do that and you know you'll be all right. And do this and God will accept you."

The rules don't matter nearly as much as God's grace does. And that's a continued revelation to me because I was so stuck in trying to get myself right that I didn't allow God to get me right, as it were. And that happens through grace. So, that's kind of a simple answer, but that's really what I think.

Host: Man, I can relate to that too. You know, my devotional this morning said — I'm paraphrasing — "You're going to have some challenges today and I'm going to be there with you." It's not like you're going to accept Jesus Christ and your life's going to be smooth sailing from there on. It just won't — that's not life, that's not how it works.

So there's so much wisdom there and I really appreciate it.

My final one for you is — I want to take you back to a day that I think you remember. As a veteran — I've been a college professor, so I had the opportunity to attend six commencements. And with the name White, you're at the end. So everybody's gone and you wait and wait and wait and wait. Right?

So now you're at the edge of the stage. There's a curtain there, they can't see you, but if you're off to the side like I always was, I could always see the next person. And they read your name and you go across the stage and everybody's — it's so happy, it's such a great time. You shake hands with the college president, get a picture, and then you're whooping it up and you go down the steps on the other side.

And at the bottom of the steps you run into Dave White today. What would you say to your 21-year-old self with the wisdom that you've accrued since?

Dave White: Yeah. I think I would go back to what I thought I had learned earlier, which was "Give yourself wholeheartedly to God and everything will work out." Not that everything will be easy, but things will work out.

And as I think back on that day, I think I had the world by the tail. I was going to make a great big difference in the world because of me. And I would say just don't think so highly of yourself that you forget to think about God.

Because it's not about me, it's not about who I am, it's not about what I've accomplished. And we were talking about legacy a minute ago — I just think that's what it is. It's Jesus. It's God. It's what He can do in my life that truly matters.

And I've said that almost my entire life, Stew. But it's only as I've grown older that I feel like it's becoming more of a reality in my life — with the people that I love the most, the people I care for, the friends that God has put in my path.

The things that matter most are not as trivial as they used to be. They're more meaningful, they're more meaty. And it has to do with that grace issue, that God issue in my life. And so I would say seek Him truly, seek Him.

Don't just say you're seeking Him, but if you will really seek God, He'll show up every time. He'll show up.

Host: Yeah. Thank you. Thanks for being on. I appreciate — I mean, you know, when you get on a podcast and you talk about this in this way, you've been super transparent. And I appreciate your willingness to share your story, your lessons, and your faith with us. It's exactly what my hope is to try to do with OG Pastors — which is capture the wisdom that comes with a long walk with God and pass it along to the next generation.

Our guest today has been Dave White. Dave, thanks so much for taking the time.

Dave White: Thank you so much, Stewart. I appreciate it so much. God bless.

Host: Thank you so much. And friends, if you like what we're doing, please follow us, share it with a friend, and let us know how we can be better. I'm Stew, also known as That Texas Pod-Vangelist. This is the OG Pastors podcast — Faith Over a Lifetime. Que Dios te bendiga. May God bless you. We'll see you next time on OG Pastors podcast.