

FREEWAY

JUD WILHITE

MIKE & KIM

SINGLETARY | *Step 5: Acceptance*

CENTRAL CHRISTIAN

[Intro]

Thank you so much for joining us today. If Central has impacted your life in any way, send us an email at mystory@centralonline.tv. And if you'd like to give financially to our ministries, go to our website centralonline.tv and click the 'Giving' link at the top right of that page. Well we have a guest with us today, so let's join Jud, Mike Singletary, and his wife Kim in the tent.

[Jud]

Well we are truly just so honored to have Mike and Kim Singletary here with us. It's Mike's birthday, this was a birthday trip. Come on. And you surprised him on this trip, right Kim?

[Kim]

I did. He knew - well we have 7 kids, so he knew the kids that were in the house with us were coming, but I surprised him and brought everybody from across the country and we met in the airport, so it was a nice birthday present.

[Jud]

That's awesome, and I think we should sing him "Happy Birthday" across all of our campuses. Are you ready? Alright, I'm not much for singing but here we go. [Audience sings and applauds] And many more on channel four. Oh wait, that's for my kids. And then it goes on and on. Well, we are thrilled that you're here with us on your birthday, special weekend, you guys are such special people with a special family and you know, you've been married for 30 years. So tell us a little about how you guys met; was it love at first sight? What was that first encounter like?

[Mike]

Alright, I'll let my wife go

.

[Kim]

As we have very different accounts of how we met, we met at Baylor University - I was a freshman, he was a sophomore - and he was obviously playing football. And when I went to the games I thought - he was number 63 at the time in college - "God that number 63, it seems like he just jumps on the pile". So they say, "Tackle by Singletary." So I was not impressed and but I was at the library walking around and looking for a place to study and this was probably November into the first semester when you have to hurry up and make good grades because the semester is almost over. So I was going to buckle down, I was not doing well in Calculus, I was looking for somewhere to sit and he had an entire table for 8 by himself. And he had papers all over it and I said, "Okay, can I just sit on the corner of this table?" And he said, "Oh, sure". And then I thought, "Oh, gosh, he looks kind of smart."

[Mike]

I am, I am smart.

[Kim]

Well he looked smart and I said, "Is that Calculus that you're doing?" and he said, "Yeah" and three years ago we were talking about this, three years ago I found out it wasn't even Calculus, he just lied!

[Mike]

I wasn't saved then.

[Kim]

So I said, "Do you know what you're doing in there?" He said, "Oh, yeah". I said, "Can you help me? And he said, "Oh, of course. Come to Brooks Hall." Well I knew Brooks Hall was the athletes' dorm, so I thought, "Oh no, I don't think I'm going to get much help."

So he took me over there, fooled around the whole time, I got an F but we met.

[Mike]

Well, I guess I just asked Kim again a little while ago, because I still don't believe she didn't know who I was. I mean, how in the world? I was always at the library, I always studied at the same table and really no one wanted to sit there and I always enjoyed my time by myself studying. But when Kim came by, I had already heard a few guys talking about her earlier in the week. Some of my teammates were talking about Kim, I overheard them and they were saying, "Yeah, you know, the girl named Kim? You don't want to take her out. She's a bad date." I knew what that meant. And so I said, "Okay, that's good." And then maybe a couple of days later I saw her walking on the side walk and I thought, "Wow, okay." And then the next thing I know, she's asking me if she could sit at the table. And I'm saying, "Wait a minute, you have no idea who I was?" No, okay, I haven't quite figured it out yet. I'm still asking.

[Jud]

So here you guys are 30 years ago, Baylor, you guys meet, fall in love, get married. You've said before that it wasn't all just sort of roses and easy going then, and there were some tensions that I would imagine culturally at that time in place that you had to navigate and maybe still feel like you navigate that were racially oriented. How have you guys handled some of that?

[Kim]

When I was at Baylor when we met, one of my friends was in a sorority and I did not plan to pledge. But she said, "Are you thinking of going through rush?" and I said, "I'm not sure" and she said, "We had a meeting about you and they're going to black ball you because you're dating Mike.

And at the time I acted like it was okay because I wasn't going to anyway, I didn't really realize how much it hurt me. And then years later, Mike got an award, like a distinguished alumni award. And when we went back to Baylor, it was the first time I had gone back and I realized I was really wounded by that. I worked through that. I can honestly say that we have never really faced racial pressure. Both of our parents were concerned about the kids and through people were going to be mean to them. But I can honestly say that's never happened or we've been aware of. So God has really blessed that fortunately.

[Mike]

In my home, it's amazing: we never really talked about all of the racial tension, all this kind of thing. I grew up in a Christian home, my father was a Pentecostal pastor. And the thing that we talked about was if God is before you, who can be against you?

Jud]

We like that verse around Central.

[Mike]

Yes. But I always believed that we don't have time for me to go into this but I always believed that this is America, and it is a great country and I am going to live free and I am going to make choices based upon what I feel that God has called for me. Dating Kim was not a popular decision in my family, it was not a popular decision in my neighborhood, it was not a popular decision in a lot of places. But I remember praying and asking God to show me, give me something, because I know that I love her and I know that I want to spend the rest of my life with her. And I prayed and I asked the Lord to show me just show me something, and he did. I saw my life - it was like a

millisecond. I saw it and I saw my life without her, and once I saw that I was not willing to live this life, no matter how successful I was, no matter what I did outside of football, I was not willing to live my life without her. And that's the bottom line.

[Jud]

Well, and the church is supposed to be the place where the color of your skin, your financial background, where you're from, what team you play for, all that's secondary because we come together at the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ and God's the one who unifies us and every single person is valuable and matters to God and every single person should matter to us and be treated with respect and honor. The church should be the last place that racism and prejudice ever shows up. So thank you for being a model for loving not only one another, but showing others how to love people in all walks of life. Grateful for that. Alright, let's talk football Mike, because you weren't always so loving on the football field. You know, they called Mike "the Intimidator" on the football field I think for a reason. How many remember the '85 Bears, that era? I mean, you can argue that no defense has come close to that today. It was amazing and you were a beast, really. Like you put people down. Now, I know you were all loving off the field I'm sure, I don't know.

[Mike]

I was loving on the field too.

[Jud]

You were holding back! That was sports! But you know, in this guy in his entire NFL career only missed two games due to injury, which is amazing.

You're a Hall of Fame inductee, you won the Super Bowl, you're MVP, the list of awards goes on and on and on. It's really remarkable. I heard a funny story that you shared about making the Pro Bowl your first time, which is a huge honor. How many times did you make the Pro Bowl, eleven?

[Mike]

No, ten.

[Jud]

Ten. See, I'm giving him a little more. It's good, I like that.

[Mike]

You just want me to talk about my first time?

[Jud]

Yeah, tell us about Walter Peyton and the story about Walter Peyton.

[Mike]

Okay, well, I've been trying to get around that one.

[Jud]

I keep roping back into that one.

[Mike]

I'm going to make this story as short as I possibly can because it's a bit embarrassing. We're at the Pro Bowl and I'm really excited about being there and of course being there with Walter.

And not really knowing that there was an initiation process taking place and of course, not really being my first time there, I was it. So I remember coming to my locker that morning and not really thinking about anything, I was just excited about getting out there and warming up. Being there for the first time, I didn't want to be late and I just wanted to show that I was a professional, I should be here. And I got out and I'm running around and something started burning. And I'm like, "What is that?" And it wasn't just burning, it was where it was burning. Walter had taken some really hot stuff and put it in my jock and it was really, really hot that day, it was like 100 plus degrees out there in Hawaii, it was smoking. And so I'm kind of limping around and by the time the guys are coming out, I'm going in. I'm just, "Oo, I'm going in, okay?" But let me tell you something: if you never had that experience, consider yourself blessed.

[Jud]

That's great. When you think about the NFL, give us some background. What do you wish people knew about football or playing football or coaching football that we don't often know or assume.

[Mike]

About football?

[Jud]

Yeah, I mean what do you just wish the average guy like myself would know?

[Mike]

Probably the biggest thing is that some of the best people - in spite of what you hear in the media - some of the best people I've met are in sports. Unfortunately, sometimes the media at times can kind of take things out of perspective and make a handful of guys represent the whole. And it's really not that way, being a part of the NFL was one of the best experiences of my life. Being a football player at Baylor and in high school, those were some of the greatest days of my life. And some of the best people are coaches and those players, those memories will last a lifetime.

[Jud]

That's good. So you guys have been together 30 years. Kim, share with us, you know, off the field what's it like being married to this guy, the "Intimidator", and what are some things that God has shown you guys over the years that may be helpful to some of us just navigating our own relationships in life.

[Kim]

Well you saw the video, so you know that crazy came home with him. And we had to work through some of that. When I met him, he was playing at Baylor and then he went into the NFL, so I really only knew him playing football, and it wasn't until he retired that I realized a good 2/3 of his mind was always on football. Then when he came home, he made the conscious decision to retire. He knew when he wanted to retire, he wasn't pushed out of the game. So he said, "I want to take all that intensity and all that focus that I put in football on my family." Okay. That scared the heck out of me because there's an intensity there. And so, we had three kids at the time, I think right after he retired we just had our fourth and you know, he was just going to be involved.

And one time I came in and he had the three kids that we had - so the oldest must have been 6 - and he had them all lined up by the dishwasher teaching them how to load the dishwasher properly, unload it, do it again, the garbage cans. So everything .. so we were all sweating. And I'll never forget our oldest son Matt was probably 4 or 5 at the time and he said, "Dad, can we play army?" so he said, "Sure, son." So he had his figurines and he sat him across the table, and we had a two-story house with a balcony and I could look down into the kitchen. So I was doing laundry and I was going back and forth. And I did a lot of laundry, so this is taking a really long time because he's telling Matt about strategy. "Son, you're just going to need a strategy, you don't just go into war, you've got to know what you're doing. You've got to know." And so I saw Matt just rolling on the table, he's like, "Dad, can we just play the kind of army where I shoot you and you die?" So we had to work through how to be a family man.

[Mike]

Well, for me, my last game at Soldier Field, all of the 65,000 - 70,000 thousand people were chanting my name. It was pretty cool, you know, "Singletary, Singletary", and that was very cool. And so the next day, I walk in the kitchen and Kim says, "Grab the trash can over there and take the trash out."

[Kim]

I said it sweeter. It's trash day.

[Mike]

And I'm thinking to myself, "You don't know who you're talking to. Did you hear ...?" I mean, I didn't tell her this, I was saying it to myself: "You didn't hear them yesterday calling my name. I'm Mike Singletary!"

But she just started giving me orders, "Do this, do that." I'm thinking after a while, I'm saying, "You know, Kim, you don't say thank you for anything that I do." And she said, "Mike, if you look around, I'm doing a lot too and you don't say thank you to me. It's my job." So it kind of ... it was a process where she and I had to kind of sit down and really begin to think about, how are we going to make this work here? I'm a football player, but that's behind me. And I begin to realize that my most important job was being a dad and a husband. My most important job

[Jud]

That's good. You've said that being that dad and being that husband - in a lot of ways, being a healthy dad and a healthy husband hinged on dealing with some things in your own past that God had laid on your heart. Really, the height of your career: You won MVP, you won the Super Bowl, you signed a new contract, it was amazing. And yet you still had this emptiness pulling on your heart in that season. Talk us through what that was like for you. This would have been the mid-80s, right? The peak of ...

[Mike]

You know what, I really believe that all of us at some point in time come to a crossroad and we have a decision to make. And we either make the decision to face whatever it is, whatever that wall is or we deny it and continue to do what we've always done. For me, I realized that I really wanted to be a great dad and I was the kind of kid that, you know, my mom and dad divorced when I was 12 years old and being the last of 10 kids myself, I really felt like our family was all over the place. And my mom and dad fought all the time and just felt like as Singletarys, we weren't really known for anything.

And I wanted to take the name Singletary and make it something special. And so for me, everything that I did, I wanted to be the best that I could be at and I really wanted to represent God in everything that I did. And so I always knew how to set goals and I've set those goals and I've reached those goals, and this was the first time I set a goal to go to the Super Bowl, set a goal to be the MVP of the League and set a goal to just be the best. And we were about to have our first child and I was scared to death. Not only that, I was angry all the time and I couldn't figure out why, and I began to pray about it and Kim had been talking to me ever since we'd been together, ever since we met each other about my dad. She said, "Mike, your dad doesn't seem like the worst guy in the world. You know, in a marriage, it's both the woman and the man." And I said, "Not in my case, it's just the dad." And so at this time I began to pray and I asked the Lord, "What do I do with this? I'm feeling angry, I'm feeling frustrated, I know I can't go any further. We're about to have our first child. Everybody is saying, 'Way to go, you're everything, everything is going great.'" I'm just saying, "Yeah, you're right." But in my heart, I just felt empty and frustrated. And if I prayed about it, the Lord would begin to reveal to me that I needed to go and forgive my dad. And I remember saying, "Lord, in all of your greatness, in all of your majesty and wisdom, isn't there something else? Can't it be something else? There's got to be something else." And he asked me a simple question: "Mike, do you love me?" "Yes, Lord, I do." "Then be obedient." So I picked up the phone, I made a deal that I'd pick up the phone and call my dad said, "I'm going to let it ring one time. If he doesn't answer the phone, I've done my job."

[Jud]

Very generous.

[Mike]

So the phone rings and Dad picks it up on the first ring and we started talking, it was a very long conversation, a lot of tears, a lot of screaming, a lot of yelling. But when I hung up that phone, I knew something was different. And the next time I went home, my dad and I began to talk and I began to ask him, "Dad, why did you do what you did? Why did you fight with Mom and why did you treat us like any kind of kids? You never said you loved us, you never said anything, you never did anything great for us." And Dad was basically trying to say, "Son, I did the best that I knew how. I gave you all that I got from my father. And I thought that's the way it's supposed to be." And so I begin to understand that my dad couldn't give me any more than he had received from his dad. And so I begin to ask my Dad a lot of questions and we begin to really develop a relationship, and before my dad passed away, the best thing I ever did was I asked my dad to bless me.

[Jud]

Talk about that for a little while, that's powerful.

[Mike]

Well, the story of Jacob and Esau in the Bible, I always thought that story was really cool when Jacob asked his dad - tricked him - to bless him. And I thought, what would it be like, what would I feel like if my dad blessed me? And so after working through some things with my father and working in the relationship and becoming friends, I asked him to bless me. And this was maybe a year before he passed away, and my dad sat up on the bed and I knelt down on the floor, he put his hand on my head, and he began to bless me, he began to pray for me.

And that was one of the most magical moments of my manhood, being able to have my dad bless me, bless my family, bless my going, bless my coming, bless my seed. And I got up and I knew without even understanding it that something very special had taken place.

[Jud]

That's very powerful and we've talked about that at the Central Family before, the power of a father's blessing. But a lot of guys - men and women - are still at a place where that may not be an option for them, they may not have their father's blessing in life. And as the initial cry I believe of Jacob in the Old Testament where he says, "Bless me, Father. Oh, will you bless me?" And I think that is the cry of every kid's heart, no matter how horrible their parents may have been. Deep down, there's still that cry like, "Will you bless me?" What do you do when you don't get to have that moment and maybe your parents are no longer alive? And you walk around and you know there's still that unresolved issue, and we understand that God, the Bible says, is the father of the fatherless. And that God himself can bless us and work in our life, but what encouragement would you give to somebody who maybe they haven't really started even working through some of those issues with their dad and there's still tension. How would you challenge them?

[Mike]

I think first of all for men and women that still have their fathers around, is whatever you have, whatever they've done, all it is, is an opportunity for you to rise above whatever they did because it's only a trap by the evil one. Not only to hold your father back, but to hold the next generation back. I realize that if my dad, if I had never ever forgiven my dad, there is no doubt in my mind that my seven kids that are here and my wife that's sitting here, there is no doubt in my

mind that we would not be together. And if we were, we'd be arguing, fighting, bickering, just like my mom and dad did. And I know my seven kids, most of them would hate me because there is no way in the world that I can just go through life and bypass a major crossroad here and be able to look at the Father, there's no way that I can receive the grace that He has for me, there's no way that I can receive what Christ did on a cross for me when I'm looking at someone I can see that I won't forgive, that I won't take the time to humble myself and realize that hurting people hurt other people. And if I don't release him, then I can't be released to receive everything that God has planned for me and my family.

[Jud]

That's good. Since that moment you said you felt something change and when you initially forgave or really talked to your father, worked through some of those things - and I know that's a process - Kim, what have you guys seen in your home, in your family as parents trying to raise kids, what are some things that you've learned together that you'd encourage us with?

[Kim]

You know, I think the fact that you're ever learning and being willing - I think parenting, we have it in our minds, we've got to have all the answers, we've got to have it all knotted up and tied in a bow. And really parenting is humbling before God and saying, "Lord, I don't know what to do with these kids." early in the marriage, you know, Mike and I are two very different people; our backgrounds are very different, I was very structured and kind of logical and orderly, and Mike mentioned his background was very chaotic and he didn't like structure of any kind. And as we raised our kids, I recognized that three or four of them are just like him, and that scared the heck out of

me. They're very creative and sometimes creative thinkers are very illogical and I did not know what to do with that. And I recognized .. I knew how much Mike depended on me and I knew that we had three or four kids that were just like him, and the thought of it made me almost panic, because I thought, "I've got a lot of power and I could really harm them, and I don't want to harm them." But I didn't know really truly what to do. And we worked through those things together, I worked through them with the Lord and I began to appreciate, you know, early on he had the outlet of football. So all that intensity, everything kind of went to football and he came home basically tired. So I thought, "Okay, I can deal with this." But when he was home, I started to say in my mind, 'This drives me crazy. He drives me crazy. He's driving me crazy.' And I thought, you know, the Lord said, "Stop saying that." And I learned to appreciate the gifts that he has: they're not very logical but I tell you what, they love hard. They're all emotion, they wear their hearts on their sleeve, they go at it with everything they've got. They love people, they see the best in people, and those are qualities that I thought, 'I don't have those qualities.' I appreciate what they have. And really just learned how to parent the kids that God gave me instead of my own agenda. I think when we're all expecting our first child, we just have the child's life mapped out and it didn't go that way. But I allowed God to let me parent the kids that He chose to give us, and it really made all the difference.

[Jud]

That's a great line, I heard somebody say once, "Love the kids you have, not the ones you wish you had." And I think that's really rich. I know there's some people across our campuses that who may be in a place in their life where maybe they've drifted from faith in their life, maybe they were part of it years ago and it's become sort of

a distant memory. Or maybe they're in a place where they never really crossed that line of faith but are very open to it in this season of their life. Mike, will you speak to them just a little bit about the difference it's made in your life being a follower of Jesus?

[Mike]

I think for me, it's really the difference between life and death. You know there are a lot of people that are walking around, but they're really dead because they're afraid of this and they're afraid of that and afraid of what people may say, afraid of what people may think. I try to have our kids understand, "Guys, everybody has their own issues. They may not have your issues, but the thing you have to understand is God is sovereign. And because of who He is, He allows me to be who I am and to be free and to be bold and courageous, and to live this life with purpose. And if I want to be the best husband, if I want to be the best father, if I want to be the best coach, if I want to be the best football player, whatever it is, I have the opportunity to be anything that I want to be if I stay in Him." As long as I stay in the vine and realize that I am the branch and I don't know anything beyond Him, I've got a chance to do some pretty special things in this life.

[Jud]

I appreciate it Mike and Kim, thank you so much for joining us, sharing your heart, coming out on your birthday. We're very grateful. Let's give it up for these guys. I'm going to ask you to please be seated and just remain in your seats for a moment. I just want to follow up on what Mike initially shared with us about the importance of faith and the difference it could make in our lives. The Bible says if we confess with our tongue that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead, that we will be saved.

And so that is an invitation that goes out to every single one of us, that no matter what you've done, where you've been, the color of your skin, your background, no matter what kind of parents you had, no matter what kind of situation you're in today, no matter what you did yesterday or the week before or the week before that or the year before that, we all come before God and Jesus Christ. And through faith, we can receive forgiveness and mercy and grace. We get a new beginning and a second start. And friends, that's available to every single one of us. It's like my friend I met with today whose old license tag that he used to carry around had the number four and the words E-V-I-L after it. He said, "That used to be my license tag." You know what his license tag is today? It says, "4GIVEN", because Jesus has forgiven him for all of those things in his past and he's living a new life. Friends, that's available to every one of us across each of our campuses. So I want to give you just an opportunity to reach out to Christ and trust Him for the gift of salvation in your life. Would all of you please bow your heads and close your eyes. If you'd like to become a follower of Jesus, you can begin that journey today by repeating after me. Say: Dear God, I thank you for loving me. Thank you for sending Jesus into the world. I believe He died on the cross for my sins, I believe He rose again. Forgive me for my sins, give me the gift of eternal life and help me face the challenges that I'm up against. God, I surrender my life to you, in Christ's name. With every head bowed and every eye closed, if that's your prayer today, if it's your commitment, I want to ask you to just slip your hand in the air, wherever you're at, whatever you're going through, just slip your hand in the air to say, "Jesus, I'm going to trust you. God, I'm going to follow you in my life today. I'm going to lean on you." Slip your hand in the air. God, we're grateful for each person who's hear today

and we thank you for each individual just reaching out to you. We pray that you will forgive and heal and move and help and empower them to move forward in their life. We thank you for your love in Christ's name, Amen.