

Torrey 1986 How Do We Perceive Ourselves?

By Josh McDowell

Appreciated that singing. Que Bueno! Me gusta cantar como eso. I've been waiting for this hour to come. 'Cause I get to go home in 45 minutes. And I can hardly wait. What I want to share here relates to everything that I've been saying. And forgiveness, and what we covered in the seminar, does love make it right?

What I'm going to share here has been one of my main themes for about seven, eight years because seven, eight, nine years ago, as I looked at culture, looked what was happening within and outside the church, I saw if this area was not addressed, we were going to pay the price of it and it scared me the way that many Christians dealt with this subject.

It's a subject that if you have the right perspective on it, it affects every relationship you have, starting with your creator in a positive way. If you do not have the right perspective on this, it definitely affects every relationship you have, whether single, married, spiritual or what.

I want to speak in the area of how we perceive ourselves, how we look at ourselves now. This can be dangerous in evangelical Christianity, but I want to look at a perspective of who you are. I want to ask you two questions I don't want you to answer except to yourself. Two questions. First question, what are you worth? What are you worth now? What are you worth? You take the chemicals of your body and adds up to \$8.73 before inflation. But what are you worth as a person?

Second question, are you glad about who you are? Are you? Are you really excited about the person that you are? The way you answer those two questions will pretty well determine how you respond to God. They determine how you respond to your maintenance, marriage, your parents, your children. How you answer those two questions are pretty well determined how you relate to people right here at Biola, whether you have to put up a facade or not, if you can be the real you or not, the way you answer those two questions.

If you see yourself as being cheap, you will perceive others as seeing you as being cheap and live it out in your life. If you cannot accept yourself the way you are, it doesn't mean there doesn't need to be changes. But in the stage where you are, if you cannot accept yourself the way you are, then look at the problems you're going to face in marriage. How could you ever trust your mate to accept you the way you are? You can't see most people today. Even believers don't like themselves.

As a result of that, we build a facade around us and then you get married. And most people don't get married to a person anymore. They get married to a facade. And you'd think once the commitment of marriage was made, that facade would go away. It doesn't. It becomes more encompassing until intimacy has totally gone out of the relationship. Because if we cannot accept ourselves in a healthy way, it's very difficult to believe somebody else can. And we build barriers around us.

There's an epidemic sweeping the country. This epidemic is sweeping the country so fast that even the Disease Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia, is concerned about it. This

epidemic is called the Ugliness epidemic. It's estimated that one out of every three people think they're ugly. One out of every three people. You don't believe me? Look, it's even gotten to California.

It's gotten to Biola. Let me illustrate it. I want all of you to participate with me, even you macho men, show you that one out of every three people think they're ugly. Okay, all of you, look to the person on your left. Go ahead. Is that person ugly? No. Look to the person on your right. Is that person ugly? No? One out of three.

If you could take a sheet of paper and on that sheet of paper, write down someone you would rather be than yourself. You probably have a distorted self-image. I could not take a sheet of paper and write down anyone I would rather be than myself. With my strengths and my weaknesses, with my abilities and my limitations.

With my shortcomings, there's no one on the face of the earth I'd rather be than myself. You talk about freedom. Jodie Foster, the actress who wasn't really made famous by her acting ability, but more by the distorted love view of John Hinckley, his excuse for attempting to assassinate President Reagan to demonstrate his love for Jodie.

After Jodie's last film called Hotel New Hampshire. In an interview, she said her only and closest friend in the movie industry was her co-star in the movie Nastassja Kinski, the beautiful German actress. But Jodie said of Nastassja, quote, "Nastassja is one of the most beautiful women in the

world, but she thinks she's incredibly ugly. She believes that she is grotesque. She cannot trust anyone who says I love you." End Quote.

Later she went on to say, it's kind of like Nastassja says, "God, if you love me, you must really be a jerk." Oh, I hear phrases like that. If people really knew me, they wouldn't like me. If God really knew me, he wouldn't love me. If God really knew me, he wouldn't want a relationship with me. If God loves me, he must really be a jerk. You say, well, Josh, how should I perceive myself? How should I perceive myself in a healthy way?

Well, I want to address that. The Apostle Paul addressed that in Romans chapter 12, verse 3. In Romans 12:3. Paul said this: "For through the grace given to me, I say to every man among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think." And immediately Pastors and others will say to me, see, you shouldn't think highly of yourself.

I said, wait a minute. That's not what that's saying. It's saying not to think more highly than you ought to. In other words, you're supposed to think highly of yourself, but not more highly than you ought to. Well, then, just how highly should I think about myself? Paul answers it right there: "But to think so as to have sound judgment."

"But to think so as to have sound judgment." In other words, we're supposed to have sound judgment when we look at ourselves. This is how I define a healthy self-image. Listen the definition carefully. A healthy self-image is seeing yourself as God sees you. No more and no

less. No more so it doesn't lead to pride, no less so it doesn't lead to a false humility. And I'm convinced we got a lot more problems in the church today with false humility than we do pride.

If I brought five of you up here and ask you to give humility testimonies, testimonies of just how humble you are and ask you as an audience to grade them in a scale of one to 10, 10 being perfectly humble. And one of them stood up here and said, oh, I'm nothing. I'm nothing. I'm rotten. God can't use me. I'm dirt underneath the toenail in the body of Jesus. Many of you give that person a 10 for humility. I'd give them a big fat zero. How in the world we got that concept of humility saying, I'm nothing, I'm nothing. I'm nothing.

Ladies and gentlemen, I believe humility is knowing who you are, who made you who you are and giving God the glory for it. Humility is knowing who you are, who made you who you are, and giving God the glory for it. Now, if we're going to see ourselves as God sees us and then see that lived out in healthy relationships, there needs to be a commitment on each one of our parts. And the commitment. Is this the truest thing about you is what God says about you.

The truest thing about me is what the word of God says about me, not your emotions, not your five senses, not the culture around you. They can all mislead you. The truest thing about you is what God says about you. I learned that when I studied Romans at Talbot. Then when you study Romans, you got to realize the truest thing about you is what God says about you, not your feelings, not your five senses or your emotions or the culture.

You see your emotions and your five senses can mislead you. For example, in flying in a small plane, in a storm where you cannot see the horizon. In that plane, you can get flipped upside down, but you don't know it. You think you're flying right side up and you're actually flying upside down. It's called Vertigo.

Now, a pilot is trained. That the truest thing about them because see, everything he can see, feel here, touch and taste says you're flying okay, except his instruments. And he is trained that the truest thing about him are his instruments flying in a storm. Now, at that point, a pilot has a crisis. What is he going to trust as the truest thing about him?

What his instruments are saying? Or, Hanes, the seat of his pants? Well, experience shows that those that place their confidence in their instruments are the ones that survive. Almost every week of my Christian life, I experience what I call spiritual vertigo. It's where my emotions say one thing to me and my word of God says another thing. Maybe I didn't get enough sleep, had too much sugar caffeine. Maybe I didn't get my exercises in. And my emotions start to say one thing to me. And the word of God says another.

What am I going to trust as the truest thing about me? Was I started placing my trust in the truest thing about me is what God says. I got off the rally coaster. Have you ever been to rally coaster? That's where you rally and then you coast and then you rally and then you coast. Up one day and down the next day.

You ever tried to put a puzzle together? The best way to put a puzzle together is not to start with the corners, not to start with the edges. The best way to put a puzzle together is to have the design, the box top. Do you see how the picture goes together? The colors fit and even how the edges and the corners fit? Well, Dick Day, who number of you have heard was telling me about a friend of his who had to buy a birthday gift for a fellow for a party.

And this fellow loved puzzles. So he went down, bought him two puzzles, and he took him back. But before he wrapped him, he switched the box tops. And then he sealed them up. You talk about frustration.

Well, I am convinced so many of the believers that I meet today, they're putting their lives together by the wrong box. Top the box, top of their emotions, not the box top of the designer, the revealed word of God. You say. Okay, Josh, what does God say is true about me? All right, so the truest thing about me is what God says.

What does God say is true about me? One overwhelming theme from Genesis to Revelation is this: you, I'm not talking to the person next to you, you are special. He said, I don't feel special. I don't care how you feel. That's not the issue. The issue is you are special. If you don't believe me, read Psalms 8. Read Psalms 139. You are special. He said, well, how am I special? Why am I special? One of you came up to me and we were talking this morning, and your aunt had given you a little thing to hang around your neck. It said, "Someone Special." That's right.

Every one of us could hang something like that around her neck. I'm someone special. How am I special? Why am I special? You're special for several reasons.

One, you are special because God gave you something. He never gave another part of his creation at creation. God said, Let us make man in our image. The image of God. Now what's the image of God? I believe it's probably personality. It's that aspect that God created within man to relate to him. That ability to will, to think, to love, to create, to make moral decisions.

You could take these plants here and they're real. I like that, only Biola would do that. You take these plants are as beautiful as they are. You are equal to these plants in this sense that you were created. And I believe the plants were created that makes you equal. But there's a basic difference among many.

One is this God gave you something. He never gave any of these plants or any flower, no matter how beautiful a flower is, he gave you something he never gave them. And that's an ability to will, to think, to love, to create, to make moral decisions. And that image of God is so important. In James 3, God said, the very basis for not cursing anyone is that that person is in the image of God.

You are special because you are in his image even after the fall. Then you are special because you are of great value. Now, I know you're not supposed to tell believers they're of great value. You're supposed to tell them you're sinners. Original sin, and you're worthless. That's what I hear

so much. You're not supposed to tell a believer you are of great value. But if I'm going to be biblical, I have to. Starts right out with God creating you in his image.

Paul tried to make this point in 1 Corinthians. He talks about what God did through his son Jesus Christ, to lay a foundation for each one of us to enter into a relationship with Him. When he said this, you were purchased with a great price. The shed blood of Jesus Christ. You were purchased with a great price. The shed blood of Jesus Christ.

Reason this through with me. Isn't it often true that the value of an object is determined by the price you're willing to pay for it? Isn't that often true? Look at antiques. My wife and I like antiques, dignified junk. And when we go to an antique auction and we see, maybe a piano, say, an antique piano. We want to purchase. The real value of that piano in the auction is not determined by the auctioneer. The real value of that piano is not determined by the seller. The real value of that piano in that auction is determined by me.

What am I willing to sacrifice to obtain that piano? The auctioneer can think it's worth \$10,000. But if I'm only willing to trade or sacrifice \$1,000, for it. It's all that has a value in that auction.

Do you realize, if you were the only person alive, Christ still would have died for you? If you were the only person in the auction, Christ still would have died for you. When someone says to me, Josh, what are you worth? I respond this way: I can tell you what I'm worth to God: Jesus. Now I know some of your theological thinking comes right unglued then. But if I were the only person alive, Christ still would have died for me.

Now, here's the catch. This is where most people get off base. The value and your worthiness and value is not something that you created. The value of a person is a derived value. It is derived from our Creator, and that's important to discern that because of who God is, who he made you and what Jesus Christ did on the cross. You are of great value.

A lot of writers and speakers do not discern that. I am of great value, not because anything I have done, but because of who God is, who he created me to be and what Jesus Christ did on the cross. I am of great value and usually live out in relationships to the extent of what you think you're worth.

Jesus tried to make this point in Matthew Six, he gave an illustration to teach a point about you. He said, look at the birds of the air. He said, they don't sow they don't reap. They don't gather into the barn. In other words, they're unemployed. And he says, and yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Now he gave that illustration to teach this about you. Are you not worth much more than they? Verse 26. Are you not worth much more than they?

Later on, Jesus said, Are you not worth much more than many sparrows? Somebody says to me, we are worthless. And I said, Well, in the eyes of God, you're worth more than a sparrow. I mean, so many Christians don't even think they're worth the value of a sparrow, and they live it out in their lives and miserable existence totally outside the will of God.

You are special because he created you of great value. And he demonstrated that commitment on the cross. Then you are special because you are loved. Every one of us want to be loved. "This, then is love. Not that we loved him, but he loved us and gave his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." 1 John 4:10. The first love motto I had was not the love of my parents for each other and for me. They only had an existence together.

I didn't know what love was. I didn't know how to give it or receive it. And I'm not being trite here. The first love model I had was God's love for me. He loved, therefore he gave. The rubber met the road. Everybody else would say to me, Josh, I love you, I love you. I love you. And that was it. They never do anything about it. But you see, love as a statement has no significance without the context of action.

Love as a statement has no significance without the context of action. Everybody said to me, I love you and that was it. God not only said, Josh, I love you, Christ died for me. The rubber met the road. As Jeremiah said, Jeremiah 30, "I've loved you in the everlasting love with tender kindness. I have drawn you." Most people think I became a Christian through the intellectual route because of many of the books that I've written. And that's not true. All the evidence that I documented from my commitment to Jesus Christ did not bring me to Christ.

The evidence was simply God getting his foot in the doorway. He got my attention. Once he got my attention. What really broke down my barriers and brought me to Christ was God's love for me. Realizing if I had been the only person life, he still would have loved me just as I am.

You are special because you are loved. Then you are special because you are unique. Now think of this. From eternity past to eternity future, there'll never be another you. You are the only you there will ever be. You are the best you there will ever be, you're it. Out of four and a half million people alive, there's no one else like me. Some people say thank God for that.

I do too. When I think of how much of my life I have spent envying other people, envying their talents, their gifts, their abilities. When I think how much in my life I spent envying people had wavy hair, bald people envied my hair. I used to envy people who could sing every time I get up to sing, the song leader'd tell me, save my voice for the message.

I used to envy. I don't anymore. Yes, I do. I used to and still envy people that can just go out and eat and eat neat and never gain weight. That's sinful. Really is. I look at food and my lips bloat. Say, we don't look too bad. I have to work on it every day of my life. I could put on 10 pounds in a week and take it off in six months. I got a sister. I know God is not just. I know it. He created my sister, Shirley. She can go out every night and need a pizza every night, never gain weight. She's so skinny. Every time she gets her under nylon, she falls out.

She's the only woman I know that can sunburn her back and peel in her chest. And I used to envy or just eat and eat and eat. And I go out and eat a pizza three nights in row. But when I started to realize God has made me unique, I read Psalms 8. I read Psalm 139. I saw I am unique. I am special. And it hit me one day when I was on the tour, I said, Josh, if God has made you unique, why do you spend so much of your time envying other people?

Won't you be all that God created you to be? A student wrote me a poem from University of Pennsylvania. He heard me speaking this, and I walked down the auditorium. He handed it to me. The title of the poem is called "Me." The theme of the poem is this: if I spend my time being someone else who would spend their time being me? God created you to be you and me to be me. And if you're not you and I'm not me, who's going to be us?

You ever have people try to pressure you to be like someone else, to act like someone else, to do something like someone else, if not become a speaker. Every one of you here, consciously or subconsciously, has compared me with someone else. People say to me, why don't you hold your Bible like Billy Graham does? Why don't you teach it the way Chuck Swindoll does? Why don't you say it the way John MacArthur does? Why don't you explain it the way James Dobson does? You talk about pressure? I'll say because God didn't create me to be Billy Graham.

He didn't create me to be Chuck Swindoll. He didn't create me to be John MacArthur, or what's his name? Dobson. Eat your heart out, Jim. God created me to be me. And Besides, I love this. You are not in competition with anyone to be yourself. You are not in competition with anyone to be yourself. One of the most liberating prayers I ever prayed was this. Can you pray this prayer, God? I want to be all that you created me to be in my uniqueness to your glory. Now think that prayer through God.

I want to be everything that you created me to be, not someone else, who you created me to be. Not my father, me, God. I want to be all that you created me to be and my uniqueness to your glory. You talk about freedom, the freedom to be who God created you to be. That's freedom.

You talk about handling peer pressure, everyone's doing it well, I'm not everyone. And besides, once I realized I was unique and God made me this way, I became more tolerant of other people. A lot of my life was trying to put other people into my image. Why I wouldn't give room for differences. You had to be like me.

And all of a sudden, if I look at myself and I can rejoice before my creator and my uniqueness, then why can't I let somebody else rejoice before their creator and their uniqueness? And I set my friends free? I have become so much more tolerable in the way people do things because they are unique, too. And I need to give you room to be all that God created you. To be to his glory.

Then you are special because you're not only created in his image, and you are special because you are created of great value. He said yes, but I'm a sinner. That's true. But did you ever wonder why the Bible make such an issue out of sin? One reason is this because he created you of such great value.

If he created you to have such great value in his image, sin wouldn't be such an issue. But it is because he loves you and who he created you to be. You see the problem today. And, Ron, this is one of my biggest gripes of theology today. Taught in seminaries for the most part in evangelical Christianity. Our theology is stuck in Genesis 3 and not realizing Genesis 1 came before Genesis 3. The creation came before the fall, and the fall only has significance in the light of the creation. It seems like so much of our theology today is based on the fall, not on who God has created us to be. Then you are special because you are loved and you are special because you are unique.

And then you are special. Lastly, here for many more reasons. But I don't want to take the time. You are special because in Jesus Christ, you can be totally, completely unconditionally accepted. Now, I knew for years that because of what Jesus Christ did in the cross, God accepted me.

I knew that I was taught that in seminary. I knew that I knew that God could accept me just the way I am. But that wasn't my problem. My problem was this. I couldn't accept myself. I couldn't accept myself. I never realized that the very basis for God accepted me, Jesus Christ death and cross to the basis of me accepting myself. I had a barrier to break through. Let me share this barrier with you. It's a very personal one.

I felt for me to accept myself. I had to be perfect. I had to be perfect. And I knew I wasn't. And I pushed myself to perfection, to be able to accept myself and felt until I could accept myself. Nobody else could accept me. So I had to be perfect. Let me show you the struggle I went through because maybe some of you identify with it. The pressure of being perfect.

I am probably the most unlikely person to be doing what I do in the universities. My parents never went beyond the second grade. I was brought up in a little country town, Union City, Michigan, where I am sure my teachers taught good grammar, but I never caught it. And through life I've developed horrible grammar and I have horrible grammar now. Most people don't catch it because they have worser.

When I was in the second grade, they tried to switch me from being left-handed to being right handed. Now, I don't recommend that. I don't mind being left handed. God's left-handed. He is. The Bible said to Jesus sitting on the right hand so he must be left handed. Besides, research shows use the opposite side of your mind to the hands you use. The left handed people are the only ones in the right mind.

Everyone was born left-handed, and the fall just affected some of them, but they try to switch from being left handed to right handed. I don't know if they ever try to do that today, but I don't recommend it. When I was in the second grade, I had to go into a room in the afternoon, Tuesday and Thursday. All my other friends were out playing ball.

I had to go in with a lady by the name of Mrs. Duel. She was about 65. It wouldn't have been too bad if she'd been about 15, went in the room and she'd sit there like one day we sat around a little table and she took a box of blocks, dumped them out in the table, and she'd say, Josh, build a house and I'd say to myself, build your own dumb house, lady. Then remember the teacher? You didn't respond the first time to get a little more firm, said, Josh, build a house and I'd reach out to my left hand to do it.

And she had a twelve inch ruler. And every time I reached out whack. And then she'd raised her voice and almost yell at me and say, Stop, think it through, do it with your right hand. A lot of people laugh at this. It calls the speech impediment. Whenever I got tired, nervous, scared, I couldn't talk, I would just stutter. I remember when I had to recite the Gettysburg Address. I

could have cared less what Lincoln said back then, especially if he only made it on a Penny. And I was standing up there and I was scared and nervous. And I was going.

And Mr. Wade just kept almost yelling at me, saying, Say it, say it, say it. And I just broke down crying, ran out in front of all my friends. When I enrolled in College, they said, you're a straight D student. Now that's not very encouraging.

I said, Josh, you got something going for you. A lot of people don't that can take you further than a lot of people's minds will ever take them. I said, Give me a hint, said, you got drive and determination. And then Doctor Hampton said to me, and I'll be forever indebted to her. She said, Josh, if you're willing to work at it, I'm willing to work with you.

She worked for hours with me and my grammar. I would quote things off and then she'd listen to it and correct me. You know what's interesting? I wanted it, Ron. I wanted her to do it, but every time she corrected me, it hurt down inside. Every time she'd say, don't say doing, say, doing.

And every time she'd correct me, it would kind of like a little resentment would come up because it hurt. And yet I wanted her to do it, listening to myself for hours. My brother used to come home from Michigan State. He was two years older than I am. One of my older brothers, Jim.

And when he would come home, I'd clam up for this reason. Seemed like every time I opened my mouth, he would correct my grammar. He'd do it right in front of other people. You see, I didn't realize at that time he was doing it to help me. I thought he was doing it to embarrass me,

to put me down. And so my brother was around. I'd clam up because who wants to be embarrassed with their grammar? I worked night and day on it.

Then I became a Christian and I realized that I serve a great God. I realized that I serve a supernatural God, a God without limitations. But my problem was this. After I came to know Jesus Christ personally, all the invitations in Church, at camps, at conferences. Wheaton College, I felt never applied to me. Think through the invitations.

You've heard Romans 12 type. Place your life in the altar. God wants to use you. Give your talents to God. Give your gifts to God. Give your abilities to God. That's all I ever heard. I had one basic problem. I didn't think I had any gifts. I didn't think I had any abilities. I didn't think I had any talents. I stuttered. Poor family life, lousy grammar. I didn't think God could use me. And every invitation I ever heard was God wants to use you. Give him your gifts, your talents, your abilities.

I went to Wheaton College. The only way I even got into Wheaton College is my pastor went down, bribed them, literally. In the first fall, Wheaton College, we had spiritual emphasis week. Richard Halverson, the chaplain of the Senate, was speaking last night. Thousands of--everybody packed in. He gave the invitation. He said, God wants to use you. Bring your gifts, your abilities, your talents. Place them on the owner and say, God, here am I use me.

Hundreds of students went forward and I sat there just broken heart and said, God, I thought it'd be different in a Christian College. Why can't you use me? And then Dick Pinell, my roommate,

who's probably one of the finest communicators in this country, he was sitting next to me and he went forward. And that was a straw that broke the camel's back. I just started bawling, got up and ran out, ran in front of everyone, hit those panic bars and the doors, went back to my room, went in bed and got in bed and pulled the covers right up over my head, trying to go to sleep and I couldn't.

I went down and got Chaplin wall shot of bed. That didn't help. I called a young Lady I was engaged to at that time. That didn't help. Can you talk about being discouraged? I felt I was the only student at Wheaton College left out of that invitation.

And I went and walked the streets of Wheaton. I was walking down West Union Street about 4 o'clock in the morning. Two weeks ago. I went back and stood in this very same place. Two weeks ago. And I just stopped there. Maybe you're not supposed to do it this way. I never got a theology class or anything, but I just stopped and I said, God, I don't think I have any talents. I don't have any gifts. I don't have any abilities. I stutter. I got poor grammar, lousy home life.

Maybe you're not supposed to do it this way. But I said, God, here are all my limitations here's my shortcomings here's my stutter, here's my poor grammar here's my home life. I give it to you. I never heard an imitation like that. But then I said, God, if you can take my limitations and glorify yourself in them, I will serve you the rest of my life with every breath that I breathe.

Well, I really believe, ladies and gentlemen, I'm living a supernatural life. I believe God took my limitations and turned them into my strongest assets. I really believe I am living beyond my

limitations. People say to me, how in the world you keep so excited about Jesus Christ day in and day out for years. I said, it's easy because every day that I'm a life, it's a supernatural experience.

Most of you don't even catch my stutter. That's why I speak fast. And when I stutter, you think I'm pausing. But, you know, I never really had a joy in this area of my life until I was able to thank him for my limitations, to thank him for my stutter, to thank him for my poor education, my poor grammar, to thank him for a poor home life. I never really had the joy until I was able to buy faith to say thank you. And you know what? I'm convinced brothers and sisters I am convinced it's easy. It's easy to yield your talents. Your gifts, your abilities to God. Heavens, yes.

Anyone in their right mind can know that God can use your abilities and your gifts and your talents. But I've learned it's a lot bigger step of faith to yield your weaknesses. Your shortcomings to really believe God can work through those areas of your life takes a lot more faith. It's about time some of you start, stop feeling sorry for yourself and start believing God can even live and work and glorify himself through your limitations. People come to me and say, Well, don't you get the big head speaking to the audience as you do in the universities?

In almost every University, the audience in two nights equals 50% of the University. We just were to school. Last week, 65% of the University came out in two days. We were up at Stanford. You only got 7000 undergrads in two nights.

6000 came out with 2300 to follow up. People say, why don't you get the big head with that? I said, I don't think so. I I said, have to admit, I get excited about it. But I said, every time I walk to a microphone, I am aware of the Grace of God.

Every time I put on a radio mic, a lapel Mike, I am aware of how great my God is. And I am aware that I am who I am by the Grace of God. And I get excited about it sometime. I think I get a little too excited. I have interns who travel with me.

I have several right from Calvin Biola this year traveling with me, and people come to me and say, oh, you ought to have so. And so travel with you. He's so brilliant, such a good communicator, so much talents and abilities. You ought to have him travel with you. You know what's going through my mind?

Boy, that guy has a lot to trust God for I can now thank God for my limitations, because, you see, I realized I don't have to be perfect. I can accept myself just the way I am, just like God does, because of what Jesus Christ did. As I said before, I'm not what I ought to be, but I'm not what I used to be. I'm with the Grace of God. I'm not what I'm going to be, but I'm sure enjoying the process as God is taking off the rough edges and teaching me things and molding me, which would be a lifetime experience.

So I found out that I can accept myself just the way I am. Let me close this illustration. I share it because it's meant so much to me. And over the years I found it meaning a lot to others. I have a

lot of lonely nights. A lot of lonely nights. Last night was lonely. It was lonely. Every night I'm away from my wife and children, it's lonely. I don't care who I'm with.

Ron, I don't care who I'm fellowshiping with, how much time I spend in prayer, how much time a day I spend in God's Word. When I am away from my family, I'm lonely. Now there's some theologians say, well, it shouldn't be that way. Why, I thank God it is. Because about the time I'm not lonely, I'm in trouble.

But the loneliest night of all for me is usually New Year's Eve, because New Year's Eve, I'm away from my family. Fourteen, or the last 15 New Year's Eve's, I'm on staff with Campus Crusade for Christ. And usually I leave Christmas Day or early the next morning, and I travel all over the country. Last year, all over Europe speaking. And 14 in the last 15 years I end up out in California in New Year's Eve in the afternoon, physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually exhausted. Somebody picks me up at the John Wayne Airport, drive me down on Laguna Beach, the same hotel, the same room, the same beach. And I crash. For 15 years.

Several years ago, Don Stewart, who graduated from Talbot and wrote some of the books with me, picked me up in a little Honda Civic. We drove down the 405 Freeway to the Laguna Canyon exit, and we drove to the Laguna Canyon. It was about 5:30 New Year's Eve, and as we got into the outskirts, we drove by a flatbed truck selling flowers where the truck was and people were using it. And as we drove by it, I said to Don, I said, stop.

He stops right in the center of the road. Some authors don't have it, I said, pull over. So he pulled over and I got out and ran about a block back to the truck and I bought five dozen flowers. Have you ever tried to get in a Honda Civic with five dozen flowers? Well, I finally get in there. Close the door and Don doesn't start the car. He sits there staring at me. He's thinking, Josh McDowell, Campus Crusade for Christ speaks on sex, love and dating. I've co-authored books with him. His wife is in Boston visiting her parents. It's New Year's Eve. He's going to a motel room alone with five dozen flowers. That's rumor material.

I can hardly wait to get to prayer meeting. But he doesn't say anything. He starts the car. We drive through Laguna Beach. We get Pacific Coast Highway. He turns left and he blurts out and says, why did you buy the flowers?

I said, I'll tell you why. I was on a flight from Atlanta, Georgia, Chicago, and I saw something on that flight I'd never seen before. I made over 5000 individual airplane flights, but I saw something in this one I'd never seen before. I got on board and to get back to the cattle car, I had to go through first class, and as I walked through first class, the stewardess was standing there greeting people with a big smile and a beautiful dozen of roses. I had never seen.