

## **A Personal Invitation from Ric Olson**

On a Mother's Day Sunday when I was seven years old, I came home from First Baptist Church of Cokato, Minnesota. Dad served as Pastor of the church and Mom taught Sunday School. I came home from church knowing the time had come. Mom was first to arrive home and we knelt together next to my bed and I asked Jesus Christ into my life.

Years later just prior to the start of my sophomore year in high school, our family moved from our home in Nebraska to Bellingham, Washington where Dad had accepted a pastorate. To that point in life, I had seen and experienced many aspects of the Christian life (See Reflection with Ric Story – Go West Young Man). I had learned that Christians could be wonderful and loving but they could also be cruel and mean spirited. Gossip and "sins" of the tongue were deeply disturbing to me.

Believers in the church Dad served before Cokato had deeply wounded my mother and those wounds affected our family the rest of our lives. I had experienced bullying and rejection by classmates during our days in Nebraska – some of it because everyone knew I was a preacher's kid. What I saw happen to Mom and some of my own experience as a pk began to rapidly make me skeptical about my relationship with Christ.

A few months after moving to Bellingham, the Columbia Conference was holding a fall youth retreat in Centralia, Washington. I signed up and joined approximately 600 other attendees from British Columbia, Oregon and Washington. The speaker's name for the weekend was Josh McDowell.

Josh told us about his life prior to becoming a believer in Jesus Christ and how early in his college days he believed that the resurrection of Christ was a lie. He set out to prove that his lie was, in fact, the truth. Josh's research had an opposite effect. Not only did he fail to disprove the resurrection, what he learned ushered him into a life changing relationship with Jesus, the Christ.

That weekend Josh shared numerous facts (not fiction) substantiating the resurrection of Jesus. He repeated for emphasis that Jesus is either Lord, liar or lunatic – there are no other choices. Josh made it clear that he had met Jesus Christ and Jesus had changed his life.

Josh's presentation made sense to me, and I became convinced that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, that He is alive and living today and desires that each person should experience a full and meaningful life in Christ. I recommitted my life to Christ.

My life has been and continues to be an adventure I could have never imagined while growing up. There have been and continues to be ongoing unexpected and unforgettable moments as I've sought to be alive and living in Christ with a 24/7 mindset. This way of thinking and living has provided opportunities in the past and present and a future that continues to amaze me. I greatly enjoy the abundant life Jesus promised as I seek to go about our Lord's business living out a Great Commandment/Great Commission distinctive.

There are many questions about experiences in my life for which I do not have all the answers. There have been twists and turns and bumps in the road. I've continued to experience the best and worst actions of those who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ. I've too often talked too soon and jumped to conclusions when I should have listened. I've had mountain top experiences and endured deep valleys. Thank God, I am a work in progress knowing that on my own I can never be good enough to deserve God's favor. Yet each day, I am celebrating a relationship with the One who accepts and forgives me even while I am yet a sinner.

There is so much for which to be thankful – my wonderful wife, family, friends, colleagues, acquaintances, associates and contacts around the world. I know that each of these individuals can, like me, be certain about eternity through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. God gave us the Ultimate gift of His Son, Jesus, but I want to give you a gift too. Please take a moment to listen to this brief clip from Josh McDowell. If you have a relationship with Christ, let it encourage you to continue to trust Him with your day to day life. If you are a skeptic or simply unsure of what to believe, I invite you to begin your own exploration of life in Christ – the One who is the same yesterday, today and forever.

Blessings on you!

Ric Olson

Josh McDowell – More Than a Carpenter – Tyndale ... – YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com › watch>