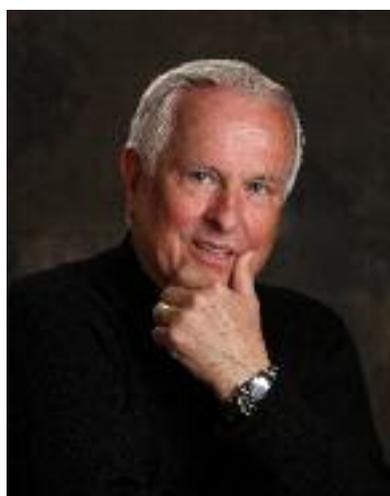


Josh Satterlund

What does Josh McDowell think?

by Sue Duffy



Barbara Gannon

Josh McDowell

After traveling the world in search of evidence to prove Christianity was a lie, one night in a London museum library, Josh McDowell leaned back in his chair and said out loud, “It’s true.”

That was the beginning of the end for Josh McDowell the agnostic, and the budding of an author-evangelist who would pen more than 100 books, including *More Than a Carpenter*, the explosive testament of McDowell’s search for truth.



Frank Bussey

During a recent visit to Columbia, the exuberant and tightly scheduled McDowell granted an interview to talk about books, the Muslim world, Oprah, and some very candid observations.

“I did not want to become a Christian,” he says of his early days. But after chasing a paper trail through antiquity, gathering historical documents and testimonies, he concluded two things about the New Testament: “Nothing had changed from the time it was written, and what was written was true. Jesus had actually done that, had actually said that.” But that was an intellectual conclusion, he adds. “I had come to believe the Bible was true, that Jesus had to be the son of God. What brought me to Christ, though, was not all the evidence, but God’s love. Evidence just showed me the Bible was true. Once I knew that, I could then consider its message.”

Published in 1977, *More Than a Carpenter* has been

translated into over 108 languages. In simple yet compelling language, McDowell lays out the evidence that continues to transform skeptics into believers. Chapter titles include: Lord, Liar or Lunatic? Who Would Die for a Lie? What Good is a Dead Messiah? Isn’t There Some Other Way? What Makes Jesus So Different?

Last year, the book was updated by McDowell and his son Sean. “The culture is changing,” McDowell explains. “The issues people are dealing with are changing.” So the McDowells edited the old text and added a new chapter on atheists—not because today’s atheists have anything new to say, McDowell notes. “The difference is they have the Internet and they’re really nice guys.” Just more vocal than they used to be, McDowell suggests. The book asserts that today’s atheists “have written articles, spoken on college campuses, participated in debates, been interviewed on radio and TV, and posted countless videos on YouTube. They have confused seekers and rocked the faith of many believers.”

The new atheists, as the book continues, “are free to proclaim that science is on their side, but the evidence shows the contrary.” McDowell thinks all believers should know what that evidence is and how to defend their faith. From that position came his *Evidence That Demands A Verdict*, its two volumes now combined into *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict*. In it, historical, archaeological and bibliographical arguments are laid out in answer to the critics of the faith, claims its author.

Sharing that faith with others who seek truth, like he once did, has led McDowell to focus his considerable energies on reaching the Muslim world with the gospel message. To that end, McDowell has written a novel that he hopes will demonstrate the truth of the Bible. *The Witness*, according to

promotional literature, “is an Arabic mystery thriller that draws truth-seekers to Christ, especially in settings closed to traditional means of sharing the gospel.” That’s what McDowell took with him to the Dearborn Arab International Festival last summer in Dearborn, Mich. It was the fourteenth anniversary of the three-day festival, which attracted over 250,000 people from around the country, believed to be the largest Arab gathering outside the Middle East. McDowell was joined by forty members of his worldwide ministry.

McDowell says he was surprised at how warmly embraced he was at the festival. He was quoted in a later press release, saying, “As an American Christian with a presenting booth at the festival, I have to say that I have never been more impressed with the hospitality, openness and warmth of the organizers and the Arab and Muslim people I met . . .” He says over 3,600 festival participants visited his booth for a complimentary, autographed copy of *The Witness*. Over 1.5 million copies of the novel have been distributed throughout the Middle East in thirteen different languages. It is due for release in the U.S. next July.



Barbara Gannon

Opposite: Josh McDowell autographs copies of his novel, *The Witness*, at the Dearborn Arab International Festival. Above: He frequently addresses the youth throughout the world.

Josh and Dottie McDowell have been married 38 years. They have four children and three grandchildren. Below: Josh says thousands visited his booth at the Dearborn Arab International Festival last summer.



McDowell has been inspired to share his faith with Muslims, in part, by the coming release of a movie. Considered a remake of the 1977 film *The Message*, which tracked the life and message of Muhammad, *The Messenger of Peace* presents a unique opportunity in history, McDowell believes. It is produced by Hajja Subhia Abu Elheja, who has declared: “Now more than ever, it has become important to bridge the gap of understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims.” That, McDowell says, has become his own battle cry.

“Right now, we have an opportunity, before all hell breaks loose in the world, to bridge that gap,” McDowell says. “That’s what we did at Dearborn. That’s what every church needs to do. What every believer needs to do. And the best way to bridge that gap is to go where (Muslims) are, build relationships, listen to them, love them, and share with them, without preaching to them or putting down Muhammad or the Koran.”

McDowell believes that Muslims between ages fifteen and twenty-eight “are the last great people group on the face of the earth who are actively seeking truth.” But there’s danger in where they go to find it, he adds. In fact, he’s concerned about everyone seeking truth and those who misrepresent that truth, which led to the recent release of another book, “*O*” *God: A Dialogue on Truth and Oprah’s Spirituality*. Written with fellow apologist Dave Sterrett, the book “follows conversations of two girlfriends representing the multitudes of Oprah fans, who unwittingly place their faith in the hodgepodge of spirituality embedded in her popular TV talk show, magazine and webinars,” reads McDowell’s online description of the book. “In the end, a life-altering crisis helps crystallize the truth from counterfeit teachings.”

McDowell says much of the book’s feedback posted on Amazon.com is positive. “The number-one comment was: this book was so respectfully written,” McDowell says. “I do respect Oprah as a person. I appreciate her concern for children. What she’s doing with schools in Africa is wonderful. But it’s what she’s teaching that I take issue with. We had to do the book.”

Another issue of great concern to McDowell is the youth. He tells this story: “As President (George W.) Bush was preparing a Father’s Day speech, (one of his assistants) called

and said, ‘The President wants to know what you think is the greatest problem facing America—Iraq, Afghanistan, terrorism, violence, drugs, the economy, what?’ I said it was none of those. I told her that the greatest evil in America is the absent or non-involved father . . . That destroys more lives than terrorism or anything else.”

And then it was time for Josh McDowell to dash off somewhere else, which he does often. “I’ve been multi-tasking my whole life,” says the author of five books a year, global lecturer to millions, and founder of Operation Carelift, which provides humanitarian aid to children worldwide. He confesses to doing most of his writing in cafes, in cars and wherever he happens to be.

His favorite retreat? “Our condo on the beach in Mexico. It’s where I go to get away.” And where does he go to be alone with God? “I’m with Him anywhere and everywhere.” **ROC**



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For more information about the books and ministries of Josh McDowell, visit www.josh.org.