



*one man's real-life journey
from unspeakable memories
to unbelievable grace . . .*

undaunted

Josh McDowell *with* Cristóbal Krusen



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Undaunted: One Man's Real-Life Journey from Unspeakable Memories to Unbelievable Grace

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Undaunted is a true story. Many of the names have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals or their families. Although the events actually happened, some characters are composites of various people in the author's life.

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Preface

MANY PEOPLE are familiar with aspects of my early life. Over the years, I have shared some of the details in various formats, mostly in my presentations. But it hasn't been until now that I have pulled back the curtain to give a fuller picture.

For many years, I have been approached by groups and individuals to make a movie about my early life and testimony. I never felt comfortable doing that until I met award-winning filmmaker Cristóbal Krusen five years ago. I entrusted to him the challenge of bringing my story to life.

That's what this book is at heart. It's a story—my story, painted in broad strokes to trace the highs and lows of my early life experience. The events are true, though some of the people you'll meet are composites of several people in my life; most of the conversations within the scenes are recollecting to the best of my knowledge. It's called *Undaunted* because it sums up in one word who I was, whether I knew it at the time or not. I faced severe challenges growing up, and my instinctive reaction was to give as good as I got. I

ascribed to Nietzsche's philosophy "What does not kill me makes me stronger," without any inkling of who he was.

Adversity did make me strong and determined. But it was a superficial strength, a defense mechanism, an artificial mask that hid dark things. What I longed for—what we all long for—was a loving relationship with someone who accepted me for who I was, no matter what.

By the time I was eleven years old, I considered myself the loneliest, most God-forsaken person on the planet. For reasons you will read about, I abandoned the notion that a family provides stability, that a father provides protection, that others can be trusted. I turned my back on God as well; the only names I called Him were flung at Him in angry, vile curses. I was not about to admit my shortcomings or weaknesses. Unfortunately, I did not understand how destructive it is to one's soul to live in denial of the truth.

I fought to make sure my deep fears and insecurities about things that had happened to me would remain secrets. I was the emotional equivalent of the clever illiterate who manages to convince others he knows how to read and write.

There may be aspects of my story that you will recognize in your own life story, while other things—thankfully—are only mine to tell. And even with the pain I have gone through, I am certain that millions of people have had a rougher, more difficult upbringing than I experienced.

The fact is that no one goes through life unscathed.

JOSH MCDOWELL

The biblical book of Job says that “people are born for trouble as readily as sparks fly up from a fire.” I had a lot of sparks in my life, including one life-changing spark that brought me hope. I invite you to read and consider how—with the help of One stronger than yourself—you, too, can face life undaunted.

Josh McDowell

APRIL 2012

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All's Right with the World

IT WAS AN UNUSUALLY warm day for so early in spring, and my car windows were rolled down to catch whatever breeze there might be in Wheaton, Illinois, thirty miles west of Chicago. I was a junior at Wheaton College, working my afternoon job of delivering administrative papers to local high schools. More than a part-time job, it provided me a small break from the unrelenting pressures of the academic workload at college.

I had hoped to get across the tracks at the Chase Street crossing before the Chicago commuter train rumbled past, but it seemed my approach was choreographed to coincide precisely with the lowering of the gate and the flashing of the red warning lights. I pulled to a stop and leaned back in my seat to relax. The clanging of the signal played a

discordant counterrhythm to the number one hit song the Shirelles were singing on the car radio—“Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?”

I glanced in my rearview mirror at the serene view of the Wheaton campus extending up the hill behind me, with venerable Blanchard Hall at its apex. The scene brought to mind the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew: “A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.”

Would I leave a mark on the world for Wheaton? If so, what would it be?

My eyes turned back to the passing train. Such a soothing sound it made. I remembered lying in bed at night as a child, listening to the freight trains that passed by, their sound rolling unimpeded over the Michigan farmland. How resolute the locomotives seemed to be, their horns blaring fearlessly in the dark while the boxcars clattered rhythmically behind, their sound rocking me to sleep.

I sighed contentedly. For some reason, I thought of Robert Browning’s oft-quoted line, “God’s in His heaven, all’s right with the world.”

I sang along with the car radio,

*So tell me now, and I won’t ask again,
Will you still love me tomorrow?*

Suddenly, in the rearview mirror, I noticed a pickup truck barreling toward me, swerving erratically and gathering speed instead of slowing down. I blinked hard and looked

again. The vehicle was not going to stop—it had no time or room to stop. With the train still passing in front of me, I reached for the gear shift to put the car in reverse, but there was no time to back out of the way. The truck was nearly on top of me when I threw the gear into neutral, pressed down on the brake as hard as I could, and braced for impact.

In a split second, my life flashed before me—a life that, for the most part, I wanted to forget.