

FamilyLife Today® Radio Transcript

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Once upon a Meeting

Guest: Dottie McDowell
From the series: A Love Story (Day 2 of 2)
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Bob: As a young single woman, working on the college campus, Dottie Youd remembers going out on a date with Josh McDowell and what impressed her most.

Dottie: I began to see his passion to have the Word of God shared throughout the world, and I just admired that. Plus, we had fun. We laughed the whole evening. It was just a fun, wonderful date. That was the beginning of an amazing relationship. We were, actually, engaged less than two-and-a-half months later.

Bob: This is *FamilyLife Today* for Friday, July 12th. Our host is the President of FamilyLife®, Dennis Rainey, and I'm Bob Lepine. If you love a great love story, stay right here. We're going to hear today how Dottie Youd became Dottie McDowell.

And welcome to *FamilyLife Today*. Thanks for joining us on the Friday edition. I cannot believe what happened here yesterday. We got to a part in the fairy tale where the fair maiden had spied the handsome prince, across the room, and we had to leave it right there.

Dennis: Yes, and I haven't seen the email; but I'm sure there were some people pretty hostile. [Laughter] But as we said on the broadcast, yesterday—what are you going to do—take over—

Bob: You just can't take over the next program. [Laughter]

Dennis: You've got to—you've got to honor the clock. Unfortunately, we all live under time constraints. [Laughter]

Well, we are joined here, for a second day, about a real love story, a great love story between Dottie McDowell and Josh McDowell.

Bob: Yes.

Dennis: And, Dottie, welcome back to *FamilyLife Today*.

Dottie: Thank you.

Dennis: We don't have Josh with us; but frankly, Bob, I'm glad he's not.

Bob: I think this may—we may be getting the real truth here.

Dennis: You know, truthfully, we're getting the juicy details of this story; and I can't wait. You know, we kind of left this thing where Josh could not remember Dottie's name.

Bob: Yes, let me recap a little bit, if I can.

Dennis: Alright.

Bob: Dottie, you had gone to college at Northern Illinois University; right?

Dottie: Right.

Bob: Come to Christ on the university campus through the ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ®.

Dottie: Yes.

Bob: As a new Christian, you wound up writing a Dear John letter to the guy you had been dating for three-plus years.

Dottie: Yes, exactly.

Bob: He was not a Christian, and you felt you needed to end the relationship.

Dottie: Right.

Bob: Then you joined the staff of Campus Crusade for Christ—got involved in the movement. All of a sudden, somebody suggested to you that you ought to keep your eye open for a guy named Josh McDowell.

Dottie: That's right.

Bob: He fit the *perfect* description—

Dottie: Exactly.

Bob: —without even knowing him, you described him to a tee; right?

Dottie: That's right!

Dennis: What some of our listeners don't know is that when Dottie first saw Josh, it took her breath away. She said, "Man! This is a man;" and she had to go sit on the curb.

It's what every man would dream his wife would say about him 27, 28 years later. What a deal.

Bob: And it was pretty much the same for you, Barbara, the first time you saw Dennis?

Barbara: Absolutely. [Laughter]

Bob: Somehow, I think that time has kind of softened that memory a little bit, perhaps.

Barbara: You do? [Laughter]

Bob: Well, as we heard the story yesterday, Dottie, you had actually met Josh on a couple of occasions as he had come on the college campus.

Dottie: Five or six occasions.

Bob: You had arranged for some of this; right?

Dennis: Oh, no, Bob. [Laughter] She had tactically seated herself across the table from him, but the guy is so focused. If you've ever met Josh, he does not remember her being across from the table. He could remember the meeting, but he couldn't remember the woman.

Bob: He was just oblivious.

Dottie: He was oblivious many, many times. [Laughter] It was definitely humbling, but it's just the way that it was.

Dennis: Has it ever happened since you've been married?

Dottie: No. No, fortunately, that has never happened. [Laughter]

Bob: Well, you'd heard that he was dating somebody else. You thought maybe your hopes, your dreams were over, and you needed to start looking somewhere else. Then, you saw them in the same room—you saw them approach one another, and what happened?

Dottie: And to my great delight, they shook hands.

Bob: Yes!

Dottie: Yes.

Bob: Yes! It was just a handshake; right?

Dottie: That's right. I figured there was hope because, if he only shook her hand, then there was no ring on her finger—there were no promises in the air.

Bob: And all's fair.

Dottie: And all's fair in love and war. [Laughter]

Dennis: So what was your next tactical move then, Dottie?

Dottie: Well, when he was speaking at the University of Texas, to a crowd of about a thousand, I brought the girls in my action group and in all of my Bible studies because I wanted them to hear this *amazing* speaker, Josh McDowell. I sat with the girls in my Bible study and my action group—in the back of this crowd of a thousand, sitting on the grass.

We were sitting, listening to Josh. All of a sudden, in the middle of his talk, he stopped and he pointed. He said, "You, out there, in that bright colored dress, are you a Christian?" Well, I turned around and looked around. I thought, "Who, on earth, is he talking to?" As I looked around, I realized he was looking at me. I had the bright-colored dress on—and so was everybody else looking at me.

I said, "Yes, I'm a Christian." He said, "Well, come on up here, sis, and share your testimony." Well, I had been trained in Campus Crusade to share my testimony. [Laughter]

Bob: Good thing you had been!

Dottie: Oh, boy.

Dennis: And did he know, at that point, that you were on Campus Crusade for Christ staff?

Dottie: He knew nothing. See, we had met, all these different times before, and he could never remember who I was. But all of a sudden, he finally saw me in the audience.

Dennis: Out of a thousand people.

Dottie: Out of a thousand people.

Dennis: This is after you'd seated yourself across the table from him.

Dottie: Oh, after everything. After all the different times—

Dennis: After you'd been next to him at a bonfire, he couldn't remember you.

Dottie: Yes, exactly.

Dennis: But out of a thousand, he locks in?

Barbara: He picks her out.

Dottie: Right. He finally saw me and thought, “If I don’t get her to come forward, somehow, then the crowd will disperse and I won’t get to meet her. So, he called me and asked me to share my testimony.

Well, I have been prepared, through Crusade, to share a three-minute testimony; but by the time I got up and walked forward, I was so shocked at this that my mind went blank. It was like an empty paper bag. That’s the only way I can describe it. As I was walking to the front, my legs were like jelly on springs. I couldn’t even remember how I started my testimony or what I said.

Dennis: You could remember you were a Christian though?

Dottie: I could remember that! That was it. So I decided: “I’m going to abandon my normal three-minute testimony because I can’t even remember how I get into it. I’m just going to share why Christ is important in my life,” and that’s what I did. I stood up there and I shared why Jesus Christ was important to me.

When I got down off of the stage, he came up to me, and he said, “Gee! That was great, sis; but it was six and a half minutes.” I thought, “Listen, you’re lucky that I didn’t faint up there!” [Laughter] But I guess that talk made an impression on him. I didn’t know that but he left to continue on his tour.

Bob: But remembered to call back, and get your name, and phone number.

Dottie: He called back my director. That’s when he began to ask questions about me and wanted to know who I was.

Bob: But still didn’t do anything. You said you waited for the phone call, and it never came.

Dottie: It never came.

Dennis: Meanwhile, he’d been dating this other girl that you watched—

Dottie: He’d been dating this other girl. Then, at Operation Alternative, when I saw him, Josh approached me, with this funny look on his face. He said, “Do you remember me?” I thought, “Oh, brother!”

Bob: There's a great line, yes.

Dottie: I said "Yes." He said, "Well, I know this sounds funny, but I've been thinking an awful lot about you since the last time I was here." My heart started to beat, you know—yes, exactly. He said, "I was wondering, if by any remote chance, if you're free tonight, if you'd like to go out, and have dinner, and maybe go to a movie—just spend some time together?"

Well, I didn't want to act too eager because of what I knew about him. I thought maybe he was dating people everywhere he went or all over the United States or something. I didn't want to act eager; but I said: "Well, sure. Yes, I am free. That would be fine."

Dennis: You know, this is interesting, Bob, because she's letting us in on the inside of a woman's psyche, at this point.

Bob: Yes.

Dennis: Here she is—she's nearly fainted on—

Bob: Yes.

Dennis: —more than a dozen occasions.

Bob: Playing it cool.

Dennis: But all of a sudden, she pulls back, and she's going to say, "I'm going to be hard to get."

Bob: Yes.

Dottie: That's right. That's what my dad taught me, and he was right!

Barbara: How cute.

Dottie: So, he invited me out. He came and picked me up; but before he did, I must admit that I really got very scared. I started to get intimidated. Here's someone who did speaking, who was becoming well-known, who had traveled extensively, and I thought: "I am really a brand-new Christian. What do I have to offer this man? What if he starts asking me about the Arab/Israel crisis, or what if he wants me to define to him reconciliation or some of these other Scriptural theological issues?"

I started to really get scared and think, "I don't know if I can measure up to what he thinks I might be." So, I got nervous and I started to get down on myself. Then, it's kind of like I realized: "Look! Just go out with this person—that you have *admired* for months.

Go out and be yourself, and just relax.” And I decided, as an act of my will, that’s exactly what I was going to do.

He came, and picked me up, and we went out to dinner. To my delight, it was like a normal date with a normal person in the sense that we talked about all the things that you have to talk about on a first date—where you were raised, who your parents are, what your background was, what your likes and what your dislikes are. I began to see who the real Josh was. I began to see his passion to have the Word of God shared throughout the world. I just admired that. Plus, we had fun. We went to see the movie, *It’s a Mad, Mad, Mad World*. We laughed the whole evening. When he let me in the car, I locked the car so he couldn’t get in—just--we did silly things and it was just a fun, wonderful date. That was the beginning of an amazing relationship; and we were, actually, engaged less than two-and-a-half months later.

Bob: Hello.

Barbara: Wow.

Dennis: He doesn’t mess around; does he?

Dottie: No, he never has; and I don’t think he ever will!

Dennis: Okay, you got to tell us how he proposed to you because Josh doesn’t do anything vanilla.

Dottie: That’s right.

Dennis: So what happened when he proposed to you?

Dottie: Well, like I say, we had only dated, actually, less than two-and-a-half months.

Bob: And a lot of that long distance; right?

Dottie: Yes.

Bob: Because he was still traveling and you were—

Dottie: Right.

Bob: —at the University of Texas.

Dottie: Exactly. But when he traveled, he would always fly into Austin. You know, not having a sense of direction, I didn’t realize how bizarre that was. I mean, he’d be going from Boston to Tacoma, Washington; and he’d fly by way of Austin, Texas. Every chance he had, he came in. So, it gave us little opportunities but not a lot.

Bob: So, he flies in one day and says, “Hey, I got a question for you”?

Dottie: Well, I think we had talked prior to that. I let him know that until I could tell someone the words, “I love you,” I wouldn’t be ready to commit myself. I had told him that because he had started telling me that he loved me. I didn’t feel like I could say it back until, along with that, in parentheses, was, “Okay, I’m ready, you know, for you to ask me.”

Bob: There’s a point that needs to be made there. In this culture, “I love you,” gets tossed around like, “Let’s have pizza.”

Dennis: Well, it’s unfortunate today, but those words don’t have the meaning that they ought to have—which is commitment. They shouldn’t be used to merely win a person’s friendship; but they need to be an expression, I think, of what Dottie is hinting at here: “I’m ready to spend the rest of my life with you. This thing is moving toward a permanent covenant—a commitment between two people for a lifetime.”

Yet, Bob, you know what’s taking place in the junior high, high school, college, single culture—love is a feeling, and love is very impermanent. That’s why many of the relationships that are formed out of that “love” end up fizzling in divorce.

Bob: And Barbara, I’m not surprised that Josh was saying those words before Dottie was because I think guys, in general, feel a freedom to say, “I love you,” without really realizing what that means to the young woman they’re saying it to.

Barbara: Yes, it means a lot to a young woman because when she hears that, she’s hearing commitment. He may not be intending commitment, but she’s hearing commitment because it means so much to her. That’s why we need to be so careful.

Dennis: And also not just mouth the words back before you’re ready to make that commitment because I think sometimes a woman feels obligated to respond back to a man and say, “Well, I love you, too.”

Bob: Well, when was the point where you felt, “I can say that now”?

Dottie: Well, it must have been right about two months after we started dating. Somehow, in my heart, I knew that I could say it; but I was really very fearful of saying it because I realized the implications. I had told him when I said it I would be ready. I knew, when I did say it, that he would interpret that as, “Okay, it is time.” So, I was very afraid to say it because it seemed like such an amazing commitment. Finally, we were on the phone, one night. Before we said goodbye, I said, “I love you.” The next thing he said was, “I’m flying into Austin this Friday night.” [Laughter]

Bob: I’m surprised he didn’t say “tomorrow”.

Dottie: That's right! He didn't waste time. He flew in to Austin. I met him at the airport. We went out to dinner. In my heart, I knew it was coming; but I didn't know how it was going to come. It was very scary to me because it seemed like such a very serious thing. We had dinner. It was in a beautiful restaurant, right on the river. It was dark out, but there were lights twinkling. It was just a spectacular setting.

The waiter brought a salad. We started to visit. There was sort of an anticipation hanging in the air. I said to him, "Well, Josh, what is your schedule like next year?" He leaned forward, and looked at me with very serious eyes, and he said: "Well, it all depends on you. Will you marry me?" You know, I was expecting those words; but it just so shocked me to hear that. You know, Barbara.

I mean, that just it's such a shock when you've waited your whole life for that; but I dropped my fork, and salad went places, and it was—but I was just really in awe. This was an interesting time because what I said to him was: "If you want an answer, based on my emotions, I can say, 'Yes,' right now. But what I don't know is how can I know for sure that this is God's will?"

I said, "I cannot say, 'Yes,' until I know for sure that it's God's will; and I don't know that. You need to help me know how I can know if it is God's will," because he was a more mature Christian. I was a new Christian. I couldn't grasp how I could determine that. That's when he said, "Have you ever used the Sound Mind Principle?" [Laughter]

Dennis: I have to stop our listeners and let our listeners know what that means because, in Campus Crusade for Christ vocabulary, there was a principle of the Christian life that Bill and Vonette Bright, founders of Campus Crusade for Christ, have taught, since day one. It was called the Sound Mind Principle. Yet, it was used in discipleship, Bob. So, to use it to get a woman to marry you has to be the most creative method of using this material I've ever heard. [Laughter]

Bob: But when the woman, who is about to be your fiancé, says, "Disciple me, here," you fall back on whatever training you've got!

Dennis: But if you're Josh McDowell, you're an apologist; you know? [Laughter] He's a man who gives a defense for the faith.

Bob: That's right. That's right. [Laughter]

Dottie: Well, when he said that—that I should use the Sound Mind Principle, I said, "Well, what do you mean?" I didn't even have a clue how to apply that principle to this situation. Josh was very practical. He said: "This is what you need to do. You take a piece of paper and you split it in half. On this side, you write every reason why you should marry me; and on this side, you write down every reason why you shouldn't. It makes it clear." I thought, "Well, that makes sense."

Dennis: So, you pushed the salad to the side, at this point, and pulled out a sheet of paper? [Laughter]

Dottie: Well, actually, what I did was I went into that mode, in my mind. I said, “Okay, I need to do that.” For the rest of the evening, basically, I avoided—I avoided the whole issue. I told him that I could not say, ‘Yes,’ until I worked this through, in my heart. He didn’t push me at all, and we had a wonderful evening.

I went home, flooded with emotion, and questions, and wondering. I got up very early the next morning, and sat in front of the fire, and took my little piece of paper. At the top, I wrote, “Every Reason Why I Should Marry Josh” on the right; and I wrote down, “Every Reason Why I Should Not Marry Josh” on the left on this piece of paper. As I started writing everything down, everything was on the side of why I should marry Josh.

There was only one thing on the side of why I shouldn’t—and that was—I wrote down I felt like I was such a new Christian—such a baby Christian—“What could I possibly offer him?” The next day, we finally had a chance to talk about this piece of paper. I told him my one question. He thought that was the funniest thing because he felt like it doesn’t matter the age of the person—whether they’re a new Christian or an old Christian.

What matters is your passion for Jesus Christ. He knew I had a passion for Jesus Christ. So, as those fears began to dissipate, I began to know, in my heart, that this was right. Finally, we went through the whole day. He put no pressure on me. We were driving down a main road in Austin. I said to him again, “So, Josh, what’s your schedule going to be like next year?” [Laughter] He said: “Well, as I told you last night, it depends on you. Will you marry me?” And I said, “Yes!” [Laughter]

The wonderful thing was we went directly to a jewelry store. We found a ring that we loved. He put the ring on my finger. This little jeweler man was probably having fun—just watching us. We were just, you know, on cloud nine. And the ring was perfect. It was exactly what I wanted, but it was too big. He said, “Look, you kids go out and walk around the block. When you come back, I’ll have it sized for you.”

So, we did. We went out, and we walked around the block. When we came back, he had it sized; and we could take it. Then, we went and sat by the river. He read to me from the Bible and put the ring on my finger. It was a very special evening. And, you know—just got really fun memories.

Bob: You know, I’m thinking we call—what do you figure—Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan? I just see a production here—*The Josh McDowell Story*. [Laughter]

Dennis: No, no, no. You’ve got the wrong person. This is the Dottie McDowell story. [Laughter]

Bob: That's right.

Dennis: That's where the real color is.

Bob: That's exactly right.

Dennis: If we'd asked Josh the same question we asked Dottie, two days ago, Bob—

Bob: Thirty seconds—

Dennis: That's right. We would have been on to the next apologetic for the faith. But you know what Dottie does provide, Bob—is she has given us, over the past couple of days, a good, wholesome love story.

Bob: Yes.

Dennis: I mean, isn't it good? I mean, just to hear you share, Dottie, about your love and devotion for Josh and how this whole thing was brought together by God. I think there are a lot of single people, first of all, who needed to hear that. There are a lot of married people who need to revisit their own love story and their own commitment to one another.

I mentioned this on yesterday's broadcast; but I just want to thank you, again, for your commitment to Jesus Christ, and to Josh, and for keeping your covenant over all these years. And you know, Bob, that's worth exalting today.

Bob: Yes.

Dennis: That story is worth telling because there are so many, who are in the limelight today, who aren't keeping their covenants.

Bob: Right.

Dennis: They're breaking them. They're really bringing dishonor to the name of Christ. Both Josh and Dottie have stood firm.

Bob: Yes. When you hear the story, that Josh has shared with us this week, about his upbringing—about an alcoholic father and a past history of sexual abuse—it makes this love story even more remarkable to hear because a lot of marriages are plagued by the past. Couples can't bond together because the baggage that comes from the past puts static on the line and keeps them apart.

So, to know what Josh has been through makes this love story even more remarkable. For our listeners, who have not had a chance to hear what Josh has been through, go to FamilyLifeToday.com and listen to the interviews we did with him earlier. Or better

yet, get a copy of his book, which is called *Undaunted*. It tells his story. The book has also been made into a movie—that, now, is out on DVD. We've got both the book and the DVD—that has the movie on it. Go to FamilyLifeToday.com to order either or both. Again, our website is FamilyLifeToday.com. You can also call us at 1-800-FL-TODAY to request any of these resources, or if you have any questions about them: 1-800-358-6329. Again, that's 1-800-"F" as in family, "L" as in life, and then, the word, "TODAY".

Now, I want to just acknowledge a group that we are very grateful for. It's those of you who, not only regularly listen to *FamilyLife Today*, but those of you who, as monthly Legacy Partners, help cover the cost for producing and syndicating this radio program through your monthly contributions. We appreciate you and those of you, who from time to time, will make a donation to help support the ministry. Those donations are equally vital; and we appreciate your generosity, as well.

This week, if you can help with a donation, we'd like to send you a love story. We know you've heard one today. We have another one for you. We had a chance to talk to Kim and Krickitt Carpenter a while back. Their love story was made into a Hollywood movie called *The Vow*; but in truth, the real-life story is even more compelling than the one Hollywood turned out. We'll send you a CD of our conversation with the Carpenters when you make a donation, this week, to support *FamilyLife Today*. Go to FamilyLifeToday.com and click the button that says, "I CARE", to make an online donation; or call 1-800- "F" as in family, "L" as in life, and then, the word, "TODAY". Make your donation over the phone. Again, ask for the CD with the Carpenters when you call us. We're happy to get that to you, and thanks for partnering with us. We really do appreciate you.

And we hope you have a great weekend. Hope you and your family are able to worship together this weekend. And I hope you can join us back on Monday when we're going to talk to a woman who describes herself as a fierce woman. She says that before her ferocity became sanctified, she was hard to live with. Kim Wagner joins us to tell us about her hard-to-live-with story. That comes up Monday. Hope you can join us for that.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, and our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our host, Dennis Rainey, I'm Bob Lepine. We will see you back next time for another edition of *FamilyLife Today*.

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