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I Am Second: Josh Turner

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Singing country music, that's what I've always dreamt of doing as a young boy. Growing up in South Carolina, it was out the ordinary to dream such a dream.

I haven't always been the guy that walks into a room and automatically the attention is on me. I'm normally the guy that stands off in the corner. Singing allowed me to express myself in ways that I wouldn't be able to do otherwise. I don't feel like God called me to be a gospel singer. He didn't call me to be a Christian singer, he called me to be a country singer, and I just happen to be a Christian.

The one thing that I had to overcome was negativity. The idea that dreams can't really come true, I never wanted to believe in that.

I grew up in a little place called Hannah, South Carolina, a little farming community a long way from any kind of big city. The first real album I owned was Randy Travis' Storms of Life, and that was the album that really made me start dreaming of the possibility of doing this for a living. I moved to Nashville in 1998 to get a record deal and try to get my foot in the door, and I didn't really know what I was doing.

God inspired me to write "Long Black Train." I wrote this song, by myself, in my apartment, and it came to me in a vision. It's a vision of this long, black, beautiful, shiny train, and people are standing out to the sides of the track, watching this train go by, just craving to get on it. At the same time, they know that this train leads to destruction, it leads to emptiness, it leads to nowhere, but yet they still want to get on it. This train was a physical metaphor for temptation.

I wrote three verses and a chorus that night in my apartment, woke up the next morning, I wrote the fourth verse. And at that moment in time when I laid the pen down, I said nobody's ever gonna want to hear this. It's too old-fashioned, it's too old-timey, it's a gospel song. So this is probably not going to end up on one of my records in the future.

And a friend of mine walked in and she said, can I hear it? And I was like well, sure. I played it for her, and she said you need to play this for such and such, and so it just snowballed from there. I ended up playing it for recitals, and all kinds of stuff, did demos of it. A girl in my class heard it on that demo, played it for MCA, they heard it. This was the song I played first time on the Grand Ole Opry, and got two standing ovations and an encore— I was completely unknown to the audience that night. It became the title track of my first record, it became my first hit, it helped me sell a million copies of the first record. So there were a lot of people hearing this song, a lot of people being touched by this song.

That was the moment that I realized it's not about the money, or the fame, or the glory. It's about changing people, it's about touching people and influencing people in a positive way, and so from that point on, that's what I've tried to do.

(There's a long, black train coming down the line, feeding off the souls that are lost and crying. Rails of sin, only evil remains, watch out brother for that long, black train.)

There's no song that I can write, there's no record that I can make that's going to save me. I do need a savior.

(Look to the heavens, you can look to the skies, you can find redemption staring back

into your eyes. There is protection, and there's peace the same, burning your ticket for that long, black train.)

I'm thankful to have Jesus. He has always been one to where I'm talking about Him and everything. It's just a continuous ongoing conversation that I have with the Lord, and I feel like that's brought me closer to Him. It helps me think through things clearly, I feel like it's given me wisdom about other people, about myself, about the life that I live. Ultimately, I get my joy from Him, and always put Him first.

My name is Josh Turner, and I am second.

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