



Click Here Now!
For Your Las Vegas Priority Preview® Opportunity!

May 12 - May 18 | [Weather](#)

Search the
Weekly:



NEWS UPFRONT ▾

<< [BACK TO MAIN PAGE](#) >>

Tesh Me

What happens when a cynical writer looks to the wholesome John Tesh for advice?

By [Richard Abowitz](#)

One of the two stoned-looking guys sitting behind me at John Tesh's show is saying the thing that came to my mind driving here. "Dude, I can't believe we're here!" he says. The other raises devil-horn fingers, and then they both gently start head-banging and chanting: "Tesh, Tesh, Tesh" before descending into giggles.

But John Tesh made me cry. I confess they were real, fully formed tears that dripped from the eyes, down the cheek and were in sufficient quantity with enough intensity that not only dabbing of the eyes but actual nose-blowing was required before it was all over. I expected there to be tears as in bored to tears, or crying from the pain of hearing new-age music. And FYI, Tesh doesn't just make with the atmospheric keyboard anymore; there are also now user-friendly lyrics proclaiming the merits of Jesus, who apparently has proven even better to Tesh than the All-Right Guy the Doobie Brothers once speculated He was.

I was there to get his—Tesh's, not Jesus'—help on how to improve my life. And if I didn't think I needed much help before, I was now open to the thought that an intervention was required, at the very least, in order to pull myself together for emotional damage control; to begin what I was sure was to be a slow process of learning to deal with the reality that on April 16, 2005, I discovered there was a part of Richard that could be moved to tears at a story told by John Tesh. How much farther could I fall? I am vulnerable. I already have a soft spot for the progressive rock of Yes, and I like the ambient Brian Eno discs.

But, I quickly realized, these thoughts were just paranoia run amok. (Maybe that was something Tesh could help me with?) For I confess, when it comes to new-age music, I am biased, very biased. Rule of thumb: Artists I like do not schedule concerts in Las Vegas to start at 10 a.m. Yet there was something that I admired about Tesh, too. I respected his willingness to follow his muse into this territory so easily sneered at by the self-proclaimed arbiters of taste like myself. In fact, I was totally safe from Tesh's musical performance since his band's mellow tones were diluted into innocuous sound by the horrible acoustics of the banquet-style room, which muffled and distorted everything but the voice of the man who rocketed to fame with the skillful reading of celebrity birthdays on Entertainment Tonight.

But I was not there to review a Tesh concert and he was in Las Vegas to do more than



Your next great date is

I am a

Between the age of

Manage Your Pool

The Water-Smart Way
snwa.com

BUD LIGHT

BOOK
 AIR/HOTEL PKGS
 WITH
 VEGAS.COM
 AND SAVE!

play music. The Suncoast appearance was the debut attempt to bring to the stage a mixture of Tesh's music with the sort of helpful and practical tips he gives on his syndicated radio show, *Music and Intelligence For Your Life*. Tesh told us things like: Yogurt was a good solution to bad breath, and a tomato is the healthiest item in a salad. Tesh had an expert speak on internal body rhythms and hired a clean comic to come make us laugh because, you know, laughter is, like, healthy. He also warned against entertainment that caters to the negative, like *Silence of the Lambs*, a flick he confessed—to general laughter—he ordered on TV during his honeymoon. Though hardly at the vanguard of the culture wars, Tesh turned out to be far less a squishy new-ager than evangelical in his outlook. As Tesh told me later:

"If you read the Scriptures ... you have to be careful what you take into your body and into your life. People think the New Testament is (saying to) be a good person, and be nice and turn the other cheek. There is a whole other part to that, which is guard your heart. Be careful; there is a lot of sin out there."

Tesh insisted that to understand all of this, I read his favorite book: *The Purpose Driven Life*; I agree. But even as I was becoming verklempt at his tale about taking his family to tsunami-ravaged Sri Lanka, I had a bit of an attitude about Tesh. I resented that he was successfully tugging my heartstrings as firmly as if I was a disobedient puppy on a leash. Tesh was able to have his filthy way with my emotions. Still, it wasn't Tesh's homiletic recounting at the Suncoast that impressed me, or even the accomplishments of his trip to Sri Lanka; it was how he and his family responded to the tsunami's victims. On his website, Tesh keeps a journal from the trip he took with his wife and two children:

"My wife Connie found herself helping the medical team, and just putting her arms around moms who had just lost their kids. My ten-year-old daughter Prima vanished in a sea of school kids who demanded that she teach them English!"

What moved me so was that it was clear that more than any help they offered, the Tesh family traveled across the world to expose themselves to this horrible sight: to make a human connection to the worst natural disaster in our lifetime. Tesh concludes his journal entry:

"We told the kids and the adults that the whole world was weeping for them, we hadn't forgotten, and not to worry because the whole world will help them rebuild their homes and their schools."

If only this were the case! The truth is that though over 250,000 people died in the tsunami that took place less than six months ago, by now, in America, this event is very old news.

I asked Tesh about it when we had a chance to speak after his performance. Despite the fact that I never would have had the courage to travel to Sri Lanka to aid the victims—I had the audacity to challenge Tesh on the spot, demanding: "How could you possibly think to thank God when a natural disaster, or as they are also called, An Act of God, wipes out 250,000 people?"

"That is a really tough question," Tesh admitted.

I quickly followed up on my advantage: "So, when something like the tsunami happens, doesn't that challenge your faith?"

"Absolutely it does. Anyone who says it doesn't is lying. It opens up amazing questions that I can't answer. That is part of the whole thing. You can't think you have God figured out. You don't have that. It is horrible that all of those people died. We are still going to get cancer. There are still going to be natural disasters. I think the message is that we not only need to pray, but also protect ourselves."

And so, on his radio show, Tesh offers protection in terms of the latest information that can benefit listeners, from financial advice to relationship guidance to new studies on health. I had sent Tesh a story and some information on, and a photo of, me. And, he agreed that I needed help. The only digital image of myself available was one in which I am flanked by two exotic dancers. During an intermission, the image of me (sans strippers) flashes on the screens adjacent to the stage, promoting that I am applying Music and Intelligence For Your Life to my life.

But how much change am I really willing to undertake? I tell Tesh that believing in God isn't something I am prepared to do, though I do promise to read *The Purpose Driven Life*. I ask Tesh what are three or four simple things I can do from all the wisdom he has acquired doing his show that will require the least effort from me while really making the most difference in my quality of life.

"Change your sleep habits," Tesh says. One of the things I had told him was that I slept about four hours a night. "You need eight hours. If you can get eight hours instead of four you'll wind up getting thinner because your body doesn't crave carbohydrates."

Ouch. I had not mentioned to Tesh that I wanted to lose weight. But you can't blame a guy for pointing out the obvious, particularly when his help was asked for (and after, moments ago, I was perfectly comfortable challenging his deeply held religious beliefs). Tesh continued: "Portion control is a big deal. I can tell you what your meals should be. For breakfast you should have only oatmeal."

"So, does Cheerios count? Made with oats."

"No! Oatmeal. For lunch maybe a salad with tuna in it."

"I hate fish," I said. "It is nonnegotiable."

"Try turkey then, but no salad dressing, just oil and vinegar ... You can have chicken for dinner or a soy burger. You only want to drink one glass of wine with dinner though, no scotch and no vodka."

I like this last bit since I don't drink and thus have already adopted one of Tesh's suggestions without having to change a thing about my life. We move to the subject of relationships, where the fact that I am in my late-30s, single and have given him a photo of myself sandwiched between strippers has clearly made an impression. Tesh points to statistics on how married men are happier, healthier, live longer and eat better. I nod, but this is not making an impression. I explain to Tesh that I have noticed that a third of self-help books are to help people find a relationship and another third are about how to make a relationship work. I figure, therefore, that by happily avoiding relationships, I am conveniently also escaping two-thirds of life's problems. Good deal for me.

"What are you doing for fitness?" he asks.

"Nothing."

"You got to walk 30 minutes a day. If you start walking 30 minutes a day, eating right and getting eight hours of sleep a night, in a week you will feel different."

The next morning, I make myself oatmeal but after one bite decide it tastes like cardboard and throw it out. I e-mail Tesh for advice and he suggests chucking in a banana. That works the next day, but too well. After that I ignore the oatmeal altogether and just eat the bananas solo every morning.

Things went even worse with *The Purpose Driven Life*. In the weeks after meeting Tesh, the book's Christian worldview and smugness irritated me too much and I wound up being unable to finish it.

For three days straight I went for a walk. I tried to admire nature, which near my apartment comes in the form of concrete sidewalks and subdivisions and piles of dog crap (in the case of the dog crap I wasn't admiring nature so much as looking out for it). After a few days I decided to take my daily stroll on my apartment complex treadmill. But then some vandal bashed in the control and that too seemed a sign from God to abandon the effort.

The only way I could make it through eight hours of sleep was to take a sleeping pill when I woke up after my usual four hours' rest (and even that was taken with BBC radio on to listen to during those moments when I was awake).

A week after meeting Tesh I had made progress on none of his suggestions except limiting my drinking by continuing to not drink. I called him for advice and he suggested I make a list of goals for my life and tape them on my bathroom mirror. I spent days thinking about what to write yet put nothing on the mirror.

"You have no goals. That is bad. It means you are aimless," my mom said.

"Maybe I just don't like to look at myself in the mirror first thing in the morning," I say. "I am no John Tesh."

Finally one morning I looked in the mirror and a friend—in an act of compassion—had tacked up a note for me: "Post a list of goals on the mirror." Glancing next to the note I noticed my face was looking kind of chunky and realized that I've been putting on some weight. I decided then and there that it is time to start getting focused on a diet and, of course, some exercise. Filled with motivation, I walked over to the apartment office and asked when the treadmill was going to be fixed. And then my buzz was killed by the ambiguous reply: "In a few days they are coming to look at it." I shrugged, deciding that having been inactive this long I could wait another few days. But then I remembered that there is a community gym less than a mile from my apartment. In fact, walking there and back takes about 30 minutes. Of course, I work out while there. I am hoping to whip myself into shape in no time or at least in time for my 20th high-school reunion.

But the real gift from Tesh was the impact of hearing about that trip to Sri Lanka. It was the one thing I kept going back to. And it made me realize that I do need to do volunteer work and make it a regular part of my life. So now on my bathroom mirror is a yellow post-it note: VOLUNTEER. And though you may think I am procrastinating; I think I will soon find the right opportunity to reach that goal. And when that day comes, in addition to making me cry, John Tesh will have—in at least one very important way—changed my life.

How will I ever live with that?

[Back to homepage](#)

[About Us](#)

[Advertise](#)

[Calendar](#)

[Employment](#)

www.lasvegasweekly.com

LAS VEGAS WEEKLY : ARTS // ENTERTAINMENT // CULTURE + EVERYTHING THAT MATTERS

All contents © 1998 - 2005 Radiant City Publications, LLC

Questions or problems? [Click here](#). Privacy questions? [Click here](#).