

## **Feature Sheet**

<b><u>Feature:</u></b>	<b>Moody Radio Commentary John Koessler</b>
<b><u>Topic:</u></b>	<b>It's not about You</b>
<b><u>Day:</u></b>	<b>Monday</b>
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<b><u>More Info:</u></b>	<b>If you would like a transcript of this commentary, go to <a href="http://www.mornings.fm">www.mornings.fm</a>, or share your thoughts by emailing us at <a href="mailto:mornings@moody.edu">mornings@moody.edu</a></b>

### **It's not about you. Then again, maybe it is by Dr. John Koessler**

It's not about you! I suspect you've heard that before. Probably in church. Or maybe you read something like it in a book recently. Actually, the phrase you probably read was "It's not about me." That's what Max Lucado says in one of his recent books, the subtitle of which promises "rescue from the life we thought would make us happy." Or maybe you read it in The Purpose Driven Life, where Rick Warren which begins by saying "It's not about you."

But I find that this sentiment extends beyond the church. After consulting Google, our culture's equivalent of the Library at Alexandria, I found the same phrase in a wide range of books. One

was about single parenting, another about rules for aging. The phrase “It’s not about you” was one of the chapter titles in a book entitled *Your Money and Your Man: How You and Prince Charming Can Spend Well and Live Rich*-a title that sounds suspiciously as if it really is about you.

This sentiment was also a chapter title in another book about emotional intelligence. That book was called *Selling with Emotional Intelligence: 5 Skills for Building Stronger Client Relationships*, which of course means that it is a book about sales. And since the whole point of a book about sales is to help me get you to buy something from me, it seems to me that it really is about me...I mean *you*...well, you know what I mean.

In fact all these books which tell us that it’s not about us could generally be categorized as “self-help” books. Their primary appeal is that they promise to improve my life in some way. What is more, there doesn’t seem to be anything distinctively Christian about this sentiment. This assertion-the fact that it’s not about you-is as much a staple in non-Christian books as it is in Christian books. It may be that this is a small gift of common grace, an example of the homespun wisdom that God grants to all of humanity. The kind of thing you might have heard from your mother when she sent you off to school and told you that talking to others is easy if you let them talk about themselves.

In his latest book, Thomas Long, professor of preaching at Candler School of Theology, observes that too much of the wisdom we hear in the pulpit today is drawn from this well. In *Preaching From Memory to Hope*, Long writes: “Sermons on ‘Five Ways to Keep Your

Marriage Alive' or 'Keys to a Successful Prayer Life' or even 'Standing Up for Peace in a Warring World' may possess some ethical wisdom and some utilitarian helpfulness, but they often have the sickly sweet aroma of smoldering incense in a temple from which the deity has long since departed." Long compares such sermons to the wisdom of Job's friends, "who can quote the Psalms and the Proverbs but have ceased to expect the whirlwind."

But why should we be surprised? What other kind of preaching would we expect from a church which takes its cues from the marketplace? Why should we be surprised to find that we have traded our prophets for Madison Avenue pitchmen? Our best sellers and our worship leaders may say that it's not about us, but everything about the church's practice proves otherwise. It's all about us. I fear that Thomas Long's criticism of what he calls "wisdom sermons" applies to the church's culture of worship in general. We have become people who, as Long puts it, "have lost the sense of worships perilous heights and who have been lulled into forgetting that lightening might strike behind them at any moment." If Long is right, then perhaps conventional wisdom is wrong. Maybe it is all about us.

That's my opinion. For Moody Radio, this is John Koessler.