

Motivational Speaker's Fatherlessness Offers Youth Hope

Internationally recognized, motivational youth speaker Gabe Salazar tells of the experiences that now help him change the lives of youth in the newest film from I am Second.

Salazar has been recognized as America's No. 1 Latino Youth Speaker by *Popular Hispanics* magazine and is a keynote speaker with organizations such as Just Say Yes and the Boys and Girls Club of America. Over the past 10 years, Salazar has addressed more than 1 million students and continues to headline more than 150 teen events each year.

Salazar's inspirational message to today's youth comes out of his own personal pain.

Salazar's biological father made it clear from the beginning of his life that he was not wanted. When Salazar's mother found out she was pregnant as a teen, he encouraged her to have an abortion. When she said no, he abandoned them both, leaving Salazar with extreme anger toward his father.

This anger and abandonment soon led to Salazar's association with the wrong crowd.

"The guys that would accept me were guys that were street thugs, street gangs—gang bangers. It's kind of the group that made me feel like I belonged—that I was good enough," Salazar said.

Different gang-related activities led to a lot of trouble for Salazar, but one day the gang asked too much, so he quit. The gang retaliated and beat Salazar up—breaking his ribs, busting his lips and causing damage to his teeth. Salazar felt the

same abandonment all over again, and no one in his school wanted anything to do with him.

A man at his mom's church invited him to a youth rally. Not knowing what that was and realizing no one else was inviting him to do anything, he went.

"People were clapping and singing and praying, and I remember thinking, that's ridiculous. Why are they so happy? Nobody could be that happy," Salazar said. "But I knew the reason I was feeling that way was because I wanted what they had."

That night he gained a new heavenly Father, and his life changed from night to day.

Today, a father of four and a highly regarded motivational speaker, Salazar hopes to bring his own children and other youth the acceptance and love that took him so long to find.

Click here to see Salazar's I am Second film. For more information about Salazar, visit his website.