

The blessed life of being **ordinary**

--Spiritual life hacks and devotional exhortations--
Learned from an ordinary life following an extraordinary God.
By Pastor Jason Young

When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, **ordinary** men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. Acts 4:13

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Introduction

I am ordinary and average. I am not super smart, and I am not dumb. I did ok in school but not great. Numerous times in my life, I daydreamed about being more intelligent, more gifted, better looking, faster, lighter, taller, more accomplished, etc. I suppose we all do that at one time or another. I have come to realize that is a sin though. God made me just the way that He sought. He had a specific plan for my life. The first and most important part of Gods plan for me was the salvation of my soul.

I am a wretched sinner who once was a rebel of God. Because of my rebellion and sin, I was in big trouble. I am convinced that without Jesus I would go to hell and perish in the fiery pit for all eternity when I die. What a miserable destiny that is. In 1981, I gave my life to a super extraordinary savior by the name of Jesus Christ. I became a citizen of heaven when I responded to the terrific news of the gospel. I genuinely believe that Jesus is the son of God. He willfully gave up His life. It happened excruciatingly on a cross at Calvary, for my sins. He had no sin but became sin for me. Not only did He die but also he arose triumphantly from the grave three days later. It even gets better; He now is at the right hand of God in Heaven preparing a place for His followers to live with Him for all eternity. All I did was respond to the gospel message, I genuinely believe in Jesus. I have faith that He died and arose for me. I gladly repented of my sins. I desire to live in obedience to His word. The Holy Spirit has helped convict me of my sin repeatedly. I have asked for forgiveness of my sins, and God has cleansed me from all unrighteousness. Wow!

Unlike me, Jesus is not ordinary or average. His ways and teachings are world-shattering. He challenges us to love God first and people second. A vertical love that extends to God almighty and a horizontal love that continues to humanity.

This devotional is very simple! I will be sharing some simple ordinary snapshots of my life story. In those snaps, I will share a spiritual life hack. Each spiritual life hack is simple yet very profound. Scripture backs up each spiritual life hack from my favorite book, the Bible.

I ask you to consider the profound truth, dig into the Bible and study the passages for yourself. Consider the insight, pray that the Lord would change you more into His image as you work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

Jesus is extraordinary; my prayer is that these 52 spiritual life hacks will challenge and help you to draw a little closer to an amazing God.

Pastor Jason Young

Creator

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Psalm 19:1

By Jason Young

I vividly remember looking into the heavens on a very dark night in Victor, Colorado, as a kid. I was terrified and in awe as I saw thousands of stars and bright lights from above. I had the overwhelming feeling, "Why am I here on earth?" I felt so small and insignificant. I felt scared and alone. At the same time, I thought I was alive for a reason. I felt like I must have a purpose. I sat and thought there must be a God. At the time, I did not have much head knowledge of God. However, I had faith that there was something much more significant than I was. The following passage from Romans helped me understand why I was having these thoughts.

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. Romans 1:20

As I got older and began to study the Bible, it started to make much more sense to me. The idea of God creating everything changed the way I thought about things. An intelligent, authoritative designer made sense to me. The Bible helped give me excellent clarity to the fact that God is a creator. The creation account in Genesis is foundational to my faith. It provides an account of how everything came into existence. It helped me understand my identity in God. I learned that I was created in the image of God. I learned that God genuinely cares for those that he created. I learned that I have a purpose as one created in God's image.

Not everyone believes the Bible. Not everyone believes in a creator. Not thinking this certainly changes how he or she navigates through life.

Psalm 8:4-6- what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet:

Spiritual Life Hack #1



Live your life with the belief that God is creator of all.

If you live your life believing the Bible and specifically that God is the Creator, then that will also have an impact on how one navigates through life. It will have a profound impact on how you view everyday life, cultural issues, the environment and many other areas of life.

What do you believe? Have you read the Bible and considered what it has to say about God as being the creator of all? Do you try to follow what the Bible says?



Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Genesis 1

Genesis 2:1-5

Genesis 5:1-2

Psalms 8

Psalms 19:1

Psalms 33:4-11

Psalms 148

Isaiah 42:5-9

Colossians 1:16-17

Genesis 5:1-2- This is the written account of Adam's family line. When God created mankind, he made them in the likeness of God. ²He created them male and female and blessed them. And he named them "Mankind" when they were created.

Quote: God dwells in His creation and is everywhere indivisibly present in all His works. He is transcendent above all His works even while He is immanent within them. A.W. Tozer

Maggot Man

There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. "For whom am I toiling," he asked, "and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment? "This too is meaningless—a miserable business! Ecclesiastes 4:8

By Jason Young

I had the incredible opportunity to go on a Bible distribution trip to China in 2010. I will never forget a man that I saw sitting on a curb begging. I have seen many beggars over the years but not quite like this one. This beggar had no feet. Below both of his knees were open flesh wounds. In the lacerations were hundreds of maggots eating away. Although I only saw it for a brief moment, that image will always be in my mind. I refer to him as maggot man. I have often thought back to maggot man. I know nothing about him other than seeing maggots eating away at open flesh wounds. I have thought to myself many times how good I have it compared to maggot man!

There are many times in my life where I want more. I do not need more, but my flesh certainly wants more. I have thought about a bigger house (my house is plenty big), a better car (my car does fine), more money in my bank account (I have more than 97% of the world), and on and on it goes. Genuinely being content and appreciative of what God has given me helps with coveting things I do not need.

Being content in the Lord is a blessing that is greater than any material possession I could ever own.

Hebrews 13:5- Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

Spiritual Life Hack #2



Be content with what you have.

The Apostle Paul under tough circumstances penned the following while in Prison.

I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Philippians 4:11-13

The Apostle Paul's words are a great example to try to follow. Are you content with what you have? Would the things you want make your life better?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Job 36:11

Psalm 37:3-4

Proverbs 19:23

Ecclesiastes 3:13

Ecclesiastes 4:8

Luke 12:15

2 Corinthians 11:23-25

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

Philippians 4:11-13

Hebrews 13:5

1 Timothy 6:6-11- But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

Quote: The utmost we can hope for in this life is contentment.

Joseph Addison

Cloud of Witnesses

Hebrews 12:1- Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,

By Jason Young

I grew up in a small town of around 200-300 people, depending on the time of year. My graduating class in high school had 18 students. When I went to my first class at Colorado State University, there were over 700 students in it. I realized very fast that I was just a number. Most professors posted grades and test results by numbers and not names. Each one of those numbers obviously represented a human being. I also learned quickly that each of those human beings had many different views from me. Most of my professors had different opinions from my own. I remember sitting in class listening to lectures about Charles Darwin and evolution, Sigmund Freud, William Wundt, Pavlov's dogs, Karl Marx, patterns of social behaviors and interactions, Socrates, Plato, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, etc.

I enjoyed my philosophy, sociology and psychology courses. I learned a lot. I had to read a lot and then take course examinations on the material. I found that many of the people, ideas, and ideologies were different from my Christian views. My philosophy professor, in particular, was blatantly opposed to Christianity. He would tug on his long beard and refute Christian beliefs all the while promoting his ideologies. These ideologies mostly stemmed from whom he was choosing to listen to, study, and ultimately follow.

My ideologies ultimately come from the Bible: the patriarchs, the prophets, the kings, the judges, the apostles, the Son of God, the great cloud of witnesses. I earnestly believe God Himself inspired the words that are in the Bible. He used human authors guided by the Holy Spirit to write them down.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,¹⁷ so that the servant of God^{a]} may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things.²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:2--21

Spiritual Life

Hack #3



Consider what the authors of the Bible saw and heard.

However, many people do not agree that the words in the Bible are from God. They would argue that they are man's words.

Regardless, I believe that it is important to consider what the Bible says. If you think, the Bible is Gods words to humanity than it should significantly influence your life.

Human authors wrote the Bible. What did these authors say they witnessed? What did they say they heard? In light of that then, what does that mean for you?



Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Hebrews 12:1

2 Peter 1:20-21

2 Timothy 3:16-17

John 1:1-5

Old Testament Israelites

Exodus 13:21-22

Exodus 14- Crossing of Red Sea

Exodus 16- Manna and Quail

Exodus 20- Ten Commandments

Prophecy about the Messiah

Isaiah 7:14

Isaiah 53

Psalm 22:11-18

Zechariah 12:10

Micah 5:2

Jesus Miracles

Matthew 8:1-4

Matthew 12:22-23

Mark 2:8-11

Mark 6:45-52

Luke 9:10-17

John 2:1-11

Resurrection Appearances

Matthew 28:5-6

John 20:27-29

1 Corinthians 15:12-20

1 Peter 1:3

Quote: Immanuel, God with us in our nature, in our sorrow, in our lifework, in our punishment, in our grave, and now with us, or rather we with Him, in resurrection, ascension, triumph, and Second Advent splendor. *Charles Spurgeon*

Smokey Room

Show me your ways, LORD, teach me your paths.

Psalms 25:4

By Jason Young

Have you ever found yourself in a place you do not want to be, or probably should not be? In 1992, I was at a party. It was full of smoke, alcohol, and lust. The music was blaring. People were smoking, laughing, drinking, dancing, swearing, kissing, etc. I found myself in a corner at this party wondering what I was doing. I did not want to be at the bash but found myself in the middle of it. A good friend of mine invited me to go. So there I was. I had a buzz going from the alcohol I had drunk. I suppose I should have been enjoying myself, but I believe that the Holy Spirit was telling me to flee. Therefore, I did!

I made my way to the front door and started running. It was about 12:30 am, and I remember running across Elizabeth Avenue in front of a car. I got to the other side of the road. The car had stopped, and someone from the car was yelling my name. That car contained two of my Christian friends.

They asked me what I was doing. I don't recall anything else from that evening. However, I do remember waking up in the morning with a splitting headache from the alcohol. I looked up and saw that my friend was dressed up to go to church. He looked down with a smile on his face and asked me if I wanted to go. I was not regularly attending church at that time of my life, but on that morning it seemed like a right thing to do. Therefore I went to church.

Later that day I made it back to where my partying friend was staying, and he was just waking up. He looked at me and said, "Dude, where did you go last night? Did you leave with a girl or something?" I told him that I went for a run and just got back from church. He was very perplexed by that answer. I grew up with this friend and had attended several parties with him, but that was the last one.

Spiritual Life Hack #4



Decide what path you are going to follow and follow it.

I decided from that point on I was going to travel the path less traveled. The narrow path. God's path. I suppose that we all need to settle in our lifetime of what path we're going to follow. I recommend the straight and narrow path that leads to glory.

The path of the righteous is level; you, the Upright One, make the way of the righteous smooth. Isaiah 26:7

What path are you currently following?



Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Psalm: 16:11

Psalm 23:3

Psalm 25:4

Psalm 37:23

Psalm 119:105

Proverbs 3:6

Proverbs 4:18

Proverbs 4:26-27

Isaiah 26:7

Isaiah 42:16

Matthew 7:13-14- "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.

¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

Quote: God does not give us everything we want, but He does fulfill His promises, leading us along the best and straightest paths to Himself.
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Metal Pipe

Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools. Ecclesiastes 7:9

By Jason Young

I was able to work at a gold mine for a few summers after I graduated from high school. It was an excellent job, and it paid well. The majority of the employees I worked with were older than me. I do have to say that I learned quite a bit about life working that job. The language and topics of discussion revolved mostly around girls, drinking, and girls.

We did work, and at times, the work was hard and could be cold, even in the summertime. The mining operation was well over 9,000 feet. In the winter months, the job was even more of a challenge dealing with ice, wind, and snow. As with any job, it could be stressful for those that worked there.

I remember one morning that I came walking out of the Carlton mill with my hard hat in my hand and some tools for the day. I was on my way to a 4x4 pickup truck, so I could head to the leach pads and go to work. That's when I saw a fellow employee with a metal pipe in his hands yelling profanity and hitting the bosses' truck with this metal pipe. He was distraught. I don't recall what he was so upset about, but I do know that was not a right way to handle that situation. That was his last day working at that job.

Fortunately, I have never grabbed a metal pipe and started hitting my boss's truck with it. I have had plenty of times in my life where I have become irate, though. One of the biblical life principles that I have learned is to be quick to listen and slow to speak. If we don't hear well and respond hastily, it often leads to anger and turmoil.

Spiritual Life Hack #5



Be quick to listen and slow to speak.

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20 because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. James 1:19-20

I have not yet mastered this to perfection yet, but when I do, it helps me not to say or do something that I should not. Sometimes just listening, taking a deep breath, walking away and not saying something in haste makes a huge difference. Allowing the raw emotions to simmer down before speaking or acting out can make a huge difference in one's life.

Do you find you are not listening or speaking too fast? Are you slow to become angry or do you have outbursts of anger?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Psalm 34:13

Psalm 141:3

Proverbs 15:4

Proverbs 18:20-21

Proverbs 21:23

Proverbs 26:20

Ecclesiastes 7:9

Matthew 15:11

Ephesians 4:29

Colossians 4:6

James 1:19-26

James 3:1-12

1 Peter 3:10

Proverbs 15:1-2- A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise adorns knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly.

Quote: In our manner of speech, our plans of living, our dealings with others, our conduct and walk in the church and out of it--all should be done as becomes the gospel.

Albert Barnes

Alcohol

The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their cry; Psalm 34:15

By Jason Young

Talking with God has been a big part of my life. The following prayer is one that I said dozens of times during my childhood. It went something like this: "God, please help my mom not get hurt and my dad to get better." I would lie in bed and try to be as quiet as I could. I was scared. The rumble of my dad's truck was very distinct. I could hear it coming from a mile away. As it got closer to our house the more panicky, I became. It was evident by the loudness of the truck when he pulled into the driveway. I would then hear the door open up and my dad's footsteps going across the floor above me. What I disliked the most was the sound of my mom and dad's voices as they yelled at each other. My dad had a problem with alcohol, and when he drank, he was not a nice person.

"God, please help my mom not get hurt and my dad to get better."

*And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.
Ephesians 6:18*

It was common to hear glass break, something hitting a wall, crying, doors slamming, and the rumble of the truck leaving. What often scared me the most is that I knew that my dad occasionally had a gun with him. All I really could do as a child was lie still in bed and pray.

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18

Spiritual Life Hack #6



Pray to God all the time.

My dad eventually left our home for 90 days to go to a detox center for alcoholism. It was a hard three months, but it was what he and our family needed the most. One thing that I do know is this: My mom never got seriously hurt, and my dad did get better. God answered my prayers.

I find it such a privilege to pray to the God of the universe and that He hears my prayers. I pray all the time, from the time I wake up until I go to bed. I cannot imagine trying to navigate life without prayer. Whether it is lying in bed scared at night, waiting for a test result, driving through mountain pass roads covered with snow, trying to decide what to say to a friend or hundreds of different scenarios, prayer is essential and vital.

Do you pray? If not why not? Do you pray to God all of the time?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

1 Chronicles 16:11

2 Chronicles 7:14

Psalm 5:3

Psalm 17:6

Psalm 34:15

Psalm 145:18

Jeremiah 29:12

Matthew 26:41

Luke 18:1

Romans 12:12

Ephesians 1:18

Ephesians 6:18

Philippians 4:6

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

James 5:13-16

1 John 5:14-15

Daniel 9:18- Give ear, our God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy.

Quote: Prayer is that link that connects us to God. *A.B. Simpson*

The Break-In

He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harms. Proverbs 13:20

By Jason Young

If I could take back some bad decisions in my life, the following would be one of them. On one particular summer night, several of us had gathered at one of my best friend's home for a sleepover. The activities of that night could easily have haunted me for the rest of my life.

One of my friends brought up the idea of sneaking into the local Elks Lodge that was in our town. He had a job working there, and before going home that afternoon, he unlocked a window. At the time, it sounded like a fun venture. Therefore, we waited for my friend's parents to fall asleep. When we were confident that they were sleeping, we snuck out a bedroom window. The adventure was on!

We navigated in stealth mode in the wee hours of the night to the window that was unlocked. One of us raised the window, and we had easy access to everything in the Lodge. We were inside for probably an hour.

The next order of business was to exit out of a two-story window that did not have a lock on it. The rest of gang went through the original window through which we had gained access to the building. I locked the window behind my friends and then made my way out of a window that did not have a lock but had a coal pile underneath it. I was able to get the window shut. I found myself dangling from the windowsill but stylishly launched myself onto the coal pile below me. It was the perfect plan. So we thought.

Being young and naive, I did not understand the potential implications of this incident. Our secretive outing was eventually exposed. A couple of my friends had stolen some items. Ultimately, all of our parents found out, and there were consequences for all of us. Fortunately, for all of us, the Elks Lodge chose not to press charges. We did have to do a lot of work for them though. My punishment at home was miserable. I was under house arrest for the rest of the summer. I could not even go to my favorite park and play basketball.

Spiritual Life Hack #7



Always consider who is influencing you.

I learned a crucial life lesson that day about how friends can have a significant influence on me, good and bad. The company that we keep can have a considerable impact on our lives.

Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." 1 Corinthians 15:33

Are there people in your life that are corrupting your character? Do you do things contrary to the Lord ways while with certain friends?

Proverbs 12:26- The righteous choose their friends carefully, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

2 Kings 2:2

Job 2:11

Proverbs 12:26

Proverbs 13:20

Proverbs 17:17

Proverbs 18:24

Proverbs 27:17

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

Luke 6:31

John 15:12-15

1 Corinthians 15:33

Proverbs 22:24-25- Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared.

Quote: Withhold no part of the precious truth, but speak what you know and declare what you have seen. Do not allow the toil or darkness or possible unbelief of your friends to dissuade you. Let us rise and march to the place of duty, and there declare what great things God has shown to our soul.

Alistair Begg

Car Wreck

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God. Philippians 1:9-11

By Jason Young

There are some specific dates in our life that we will always remember where we were and what we were doing on that day. For example, I vividly remember sitting in my school library watching the news coverage of the space shuttle Challenger the day it exploded on January 28, 1986. On September 11, 2001, I was picking up a coffee drink at a Dutch Bros when Josh asked me if I had heard about the Twin Towers collapsing in New York City. August 14, 1988, is undoubtedly another one of those days.

At 12:05 pm on that day, I found myself in a very uncomfortable situation. A blue sedan had just plowed into the driver's side of the 1975 Ford Grenada that I was driving. I had been approaching a sharp curve on a dirt road when the driver lost control of his car. The impact was brutal. I blacked out for a brief moment. When I came to, I looked over to the passenger seat and saw my girlfriend's face covered in blood with several of her teeth gone. She was screaming. My seat belt was digging into my neck, and I could not get it off. That is when I realized that I was stuck. Tangled in a mess of twisted metal was my left leg. I tried to free myself but could not move. That is when I realized that it hurt, so I started to scream. My left femur had multiple fractures. I began to pray silently. I was in pain but calm.

It took one hour for the ambulance to arrive. A Good Samaritan was by my side holding me in a position that lessened the pressure on my leg. Others were helping my friends with their injuries. Someone had a pocketknife and was able to cut through my seat belt, so that relieved the pressure on my neck. My girlfriend was not in good shape. I could see her lying in the dirt right outside of the car. Several people were helping her. Finally, an ambulance arrived. They assessed the situation and determined that because of our remote location in the mountains they would need a life flight helicopter. Once the ambulance arrived, they were able to administer some morphine for the pain. It was a challenging situation. According to the emergency personnel, I was very calm. God gave me peace and I endured the pain.

Three hours and 10 minutes later the emergency personnel freed me from the wreckage. It was the most relieved I have ever been in my life. I got a costly helicopter ride to a hospital in Colorado Springs. My leg was in traction, and eventually, I had surgery to put a 16-inch rod in my leg to help the femur heal.

Spiritual Life

Hack #8



Believe that God has a plan for your life.

The car accident was a great trial in my life. I had plans to go to college. I wanted to try to play basketball while there. I could not wait to leave home, my small town; I was ready to spread my wings. I had other things in mind after graduating. All of my plans were going have to wait. The priority was to heal and rehab. It was a grueling and extensive process. However, during that time many vital things happen. I grew closer to my parents. I grew in my relationship with God. I learned about perseverance. I had to allow others to help me. It was a precious time in my life.

Proverbs 16:1-4- To humans belong the plans of the heart, but from the LORD comes the proper answer of the tongue. All a person's ways seem pure to them, but motives are weighed by the LORD. Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and he will establish your plans. The LORD works out everything to its proper end—even the wicked for a day of disaster.

Do you trust God with the plan for your life? Have you ever had something happen where you question that plan?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Psalm 33:11

Psalm 138:8

Psalm 119:105

Proverbs 16:1-4

Proverbs 16:9

Proverbs 19:21

Isaiah 46:10

Jeremiah 1:5

Jeremiah 29:11

Luke 9:2

Ephesians 1:4

Ephesians 2:8-10

Ephesians 5:15-20

Philippians 1:9-11

1 Timothy 2:3-4

James 1:5

1 Peter 2:15

Jeremiah 1:5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

Quote: The Spirit-filled life is not a special, deluxe edition of Christianity. It is part and parcel of the total plan of God for His people. *A.W. Tozer*

Camp

They spring up like flowers and wither away; like fleeting shadows, they do not endure. Job 14:2

By Jason Young

Long days and fast weeks. One of my favorite places that I have been able to serve the Lord is at Mountain Lakes Bible Camp (MLBC). My first full-time ministry position was the Pastor of Camping ministries at MLBC. Over the years, I have had the privilege of directing, speaking, counseling, being a camp nurse, scrubbing pots and pans, and washing dishes while being part of over 50 camps. These camps included youth camps, father/son camps, men's camps, marriage retreats, outdoor school programs and college-age camps.

These camps have been compelling and super fun, and they have allowed me to meeting great people. All the while, though, they can be spiritually draining and physically exhausting. The days at camp feel very long. However, weeks at camp seem to go by fast. Laying my head on the pillow at 12:00 am on Monday night the first day of a weeklong camp, I have often wondered, "How am I going to make it to the end of the week? I am exhausted, and it's only *Monday!*" Then the next thing I know it is clean up time, and we are heading home.

Where does time go? Where have the years gone? It seemed like yesterday when I was a kid without a care in the world, playing basketball at the park, playing fetch with my loyal dogs, riding bikes without a helmet, making bombs with fireworks, etc. Today, I look in the mirror and see less hair every day, more grey hairs and new wrinkles, all the while feeling new twinges of pain from somewhere in my body. Tomorrow is coming fast.

Psalm 78:39- He remembered that they were but flesh, a passing breeze that does not return.

Spiritual Life Hack #9



Embrace every day and every moment

Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." ¹⁴ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.
James 4:13-14

Time goes by fast! Knowing this is critical to each day and the time, that God has granted you. Life is too short to hold grudges, to be bitter while not forgiving people. As we rejoice in the Lord, we should genuinely seize every opportunity we have with those that mean the most to us, all the while embracing the blessings of this short life while looking forward to eternity in Heaven with Jesus.

Consider the fact of how short life is. Is there anything you need to do?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

1 Chronicles 29:15

Job 7:6

Job 9:25

Job 14:2

Psalms 78:39

Psalms 89:47

Psalms 90:12

Psalms 102:11

Matthew 6:33-34

James 4:13-14

1 Peter 1:24

1 Samuel 20:3- But David took an oath and said, "Your father knows very well that I have found favor in your eyes, and he has said to himself, 'Jonathan must not know this or he will be grieved.' Yet as surely as the LORD lives and as you live, there is only a step between me and death."

Quote: God has promised forgiveness to your repentance, but He has not promised tomorrow to your procrastination. *Augustine*

Bible Thumper

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12

By Jason Young

In January of 1991, I got a message on my answering machine. It merely said that this was a “Raging Bull Alert” and I needed to be at my Army unit’s location in Pueblo, Colorado, on Friday at 7:15 am. At first, I did not comprehend what that meant. I found out quickly that my current plans of going to college were going to have to wait. At the time, I was serving in the Army as an infantry reservist. The United States Army needed more active personnel for the build-up of troops in Kuwait, so they called up my unit for Operation Desert Storm. I was in shock, and scared. I did not know what my future had in store. Would I end up in the war? Would I survive? My plans and aspirations did not have this activation in mind.

A few days after that phone message I was at Fort Carson in Colorado Springs preparing for a deployment. Included in this initial preparation was a plethora of paperwork, immunizations shots, checking out of military gear, early morning exercise, weapons training, and lots of anxiety and worry. I had a Bible with me and decided that it was a good time to start reading it. I knew that I couldn’t control the circumstances. I also knew that God was in charge of my life. Through prayer and His Word, I found the peace that I needed. There were very few believers in my unit.

Philippians 4:4-6- Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Eventually, we landed in Frankfurt Germany. I had never been that far from home. The terrain reminded me of Oregon. We initially went to Rays Barracks in Friedberg, Germany. In 1958, Elvis Presley spent time at these barracks. A plaque and monument were on display in the center of the base in his memory. But we weren’t there for pleasure. The next couple of weeks were very strenuous and stressful. We were training to go to the front lines in Kuwait. I spent most of my time getting familiar with the M60 machine gun. When we were not in the field training, we took turns guarding a critical American housing base that had a school and spouses of deployed personnel. We had a crash course in terrorism and detecting car bombs. Praise God that no one tried to bring in a weapon because I felt very unprepared for that.

During this time I began to hear rumbles of how “Young” was a Bible thumper. I am not sure what was meant by that, but I did stand out. I did enjoy reading the Bible and finding strength in God’s words. As the anxiety and stress continued to build, I began having different people come to me for advice. I guess it was because they knew I was different from most of the others. I had some great conversations with people.

Spiritual Life Hack #10



Read your bible often

On January 17, 1991, Operation Desert Storm began an extensive aerial bombing campaign. The stress intensified. For the next month, I saw the chapel on the base increase in attendance. The chaplains were busy talking with troops. A fellow soldier confided in me about how his marriage was falling apart. Other soldiers were curious about God.

Then on February 28, 1991, Operation Desert Storm was over. Just like that the war was over. The whole mood changed. We were going home! It took a month before we got to head back to Colorado. The stress and anxiety subsided. The next month was full of soldiers who engaged in adulterous relationships, drunkenness, drug use, wild sex escapades, strip clubs, red light district visits, foul language and very little chapel attendance.

It was an eye-opening experience for me. The same soldiers who seemed interested in God because of the stressful circumstances a couple of weeks prior abandoned God.

Do you tend to seek God more when things are not going well? If so, I encourage you to pursue Him daily, regardless of your circumstances, the good and the bad. How is Bible reading apart of your life?



Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Psalm 119:9
Psalm 119:105
Isaiah 34:16
Isaiah 40:8
Matthew 4:4
Matthew 7:24
Matthew 24:35
Luke 11:28
John 1:1
John 1:14
Philippians 2:14-16
2 Timothy 2:15
2 Timothy 3:16-17
Hebrews 4:12
James 1:22
1 Peter 2:2
Revelation 22:19

John 8:31-32- To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Quote: I prayed for faith and thought that some day faith would come down and strike me like lightning. But faith did not seem to come. One day I read in the tenth chapter of Romans, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." I had up to this time closed my Bible and prayed for faith. I now opened my Bible and began to study, and faith has been growing ever since. *D.L. Moody*

Garage Fire

Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them?" declares the LORD. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" declares the LORD. Jeremiah 23:24

By Jason Young

I love fire! There is something about the crackling sound, bright flames, smoke plumes, heat, and the intensity of it burning. While growing up, I did some idiotic things. Here is a disclaimer to the kids reading this. Do not do this! I was blessed to have some entertaining childhood friends. One of my best childhood friends growing up was an individual with whom I had a lot of fun. We also got into a lot of trouble.

For example, we often would run around with a can of WD40 while spraying it into a lit lighter. It was a great way to make a torch! We would prowl around looking for something to scorch. A bug had no chance of survival.

On one summer day, we got bored with the WD40 torches and had the brilliant idea of playing with gasoline. It started out innocent enough. Pour a little gas on the ground. Light a match and throw it into the gas. Poof, the gas would eventually burn out. That was cool. It rapidly escalated to pouring more gas, which produced an even more prominent poof and took even longer to burn out. My friend's dad was a police officer, and we knew that he would be getting home from work soon, so we needed to wrap up this operation. But not before the grand finale!

I had about three-quarters of a gallon of gas left. I was pouring a little bit out of a jug when my friend's little brother suddenly lit a match and dropped it. I pulled the container back quickly, but the flames rapidly caught the dribble and the next thing we knew the whole garage floor was on fire! motorcycle with the gas cap off was sitting in the middle of the garage. We grabbed a water hose to try to extinguish it. That did not work.

It was a dangerous situation, and it was getting rapidly worse. My friend's dad suddenly pulled up in his squad car. He grabbed a fire extinguisher from his vehicle and emptied it. The fire was still burning but was much more under control. My friend's dad, however, was not happy. He pointed his finger at me and sternly told me to go home *immediately*. I ducked my head and sprinted home. By the time I got to my bedroom, I was hyperventilating. My mom asked me what I was doing. Of course, I said, "Um...nothing." Like I was going to get away with starting my friend's garage on fire! I thought I had gotten away with it. Of course, that was until our phone rang and it was my friend's mother explaining to her what just had happened.

Spiritual Life

Hack # 11



Know that you cannot hide anything from God

As we navigate through life, we all are going to do some dumb things. I somehow thought that I was going to be able to hide the fact that I recklessly helped catch a garage on fire. We can try to hide things from people, but we can hide nothing from God. God knows absolutely everything about individual people.

You have searched me, LORD, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. Psalm 139:1-6

Are you trying to hide something from God or other people?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Genesis 3:8-10

Psalms 139:1-10

Proverbs 15:3

Jeremiah 16:17

Jeremiah 23:23-24

Amos 9:3

Romans 8:35-39

Hebrews 4:13

Job 34:21- “His eyes are on the ways of mortals; he sees their every step.

Quote: God dwells in His creation and is everywhere indivisibly present in all His works. He is transcendent above all His works even while He is immanent within them. *A.W. Tozer*

Chosen

But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as first fruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. 2 Thessalonians 2:13

By Jason Young

James Naismith invented my favorite game. He initially used a peach basket secured to a wall as his first hoop. It was the game of basketball.

The town I grew up in had a small park. There was a little dirt pad with a couple of rickety hoops. The size of the court did not matter to me. It was *my* basketball court. Eventually, the city upgraded and put a concrete slab down. I spent numerous hours playing at the park. During the winter, I would have to bring a snow shovel to clear the court of snow. I did not care how cold it was, I played. Even with moon boots, a stocking cap and gloves on, I played. When things were not going well at home, I would go to the park. On beautiful summer days, I was at the park. On cool summer evenings, I was at the park. I loved playing basketball at Victor Park.

In 1985, I was a 5' 4" freshmen trying out for my school's high school basketball team. The probability of me making the team was not good. That year's junior and senior classes had several good players trying out. This same group of juniors and seniors had just led the football team to the state semifinals. They were bigger and better than I was.

On the day, the coach chose the team he quickly called out 11 players. He typically picked 12. I then saw him talking with a group of senior players. The next thing I knew is he called my name. "Young, you are on the varsity squad." I had been "chosen"! I primarily played on the JV team that year but got to sit on the bench and travel with the varsity squad. I rarely played in the varsity games. It did not matter to me though. The older kids and the coach *chose* me.

Spiritual Life Hack # 12



Know that God has
chosen you

What an incredible feeling to be chosen for the team. What is even more amazing is how God wants us for His team.

But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 1 Corinthians 1:27

Even though we may seem too short or small, God does not care about that. He chooses people for His glory.

For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. Deuteronomy 7:6

How does it feel to know that God has chosen you? That you are on His team?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Deuteronomy 7:6

Deuteronomy 14:2

1 Corinthians 1:27

2 Thessalonians 2:13

Psalm 50:15

Isaiah 43:1

John 6:44

John 10:4

John 15:16

Romans 8:28-30

1 Corinthians 1:27

Ephesians 1:11

Ephesians 2:19

1 Peter 2:9

Ephesians 1:3-5- Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he[a] predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.

Quote: There are two great truths which from this platform I have proclaimed for many years. The first is that salvation is free to every man who will have it; the second is that God gives salvation to a people whom He has chosen; and these truths are not in conflict with each other in the least degree.

Charles Spurgeon

Shy

Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe. Proverbs 29:25

By Jason Young

On most Sunday mornings, I find myself in front of a couple of hundred people. Not only am I in front of them but I have to open up my mouth and talk. Yikes! I am shy. I would classify myself as an introvert. For as long as I can remember, I have been this way. I like people, but talking to them is not necessarily in my comfort zone.

One summer I found myself at Fort Sill Army Post, north of Lawton Oklahoma, for two weeks. My mission was simple: teach basic combat first aid to soldiers during their first week of basic training. I knew the first aid material well. It entailed teaching the soldiers how to identify the problem, apply field dressings to various wounds, and apply necessary splints and tourniquets if necessary. I felt comfortable with the material that I needed to teach. The part that made me very uncomfortable was the public speaking part.

My initial role was to address the whole platoon on their first day of training before breaking into smaller groups and working with the soldiers. I was standing on a platform, and I could hear them marching toward me as they bellowed out a cadence that was coming from their drill sergeant. They mimicked him with a booming rhythm. They were loud and proud. It sounded awesome!

The soldiers marched into the room where around 100 chairs were set up. I stood on the platform as a gallant fellow soldier and watched those 100 recruits come funneling in with baldheads and loud voices. The drill sergeant brought them to attention, and there they stood with eyes on me. The drill sergeant passed it over to me to speak to the group. The first thing I said was, "Take a seat," and in unity, they all sat down. No one talked. I then said, "On your feet!" and boom, they all stood instantly to attention. I repeated this process several times. I was nervous and on the verge of trembling. I had a big lump in my throat and sweaty palms. I realized I was going to need to do something different. I took a deep breath and then began the initial comments that I had practiced.

Spiritual Life Hack # 13



You can do more than you often think

I can't help wondering if God was in the process of preparing me to be in front of people on a weekly basis, as I had no choice but to do something that I was not comfortable doing. Nevertheless, I endured, and each day got more comfortable as new groups came through daily. I have learned that we can do what we don't think we can. Knowing that God did not give us a spirit of timidity is essential. God provides us with a sense of love, power, and a sound mind.

2 Timothy 1:7 - For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid but gives us power, love, and self-discipline.

Yes, it might not be easy sometimes, but with God, we can take a deep breath and do things that we do not like or think we're not capable of doing.

Are you not doing something that you should be? What is holding you back?

Isaiah 26:3- You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Exodus 4:10-15- Moses said to the Lord, "Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue." The Lord said to him, "Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the Lord? 12 Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say." But Moses said, "Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else." Then the Lord's anger burned against Moses and he said, "What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and he will be glad to see you. 15 You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do.

Proverbs 29:25

Isaiah 26:3

Isaiah 41:10

Matthew 5:14-16

Acts 4:29

Philippians 4:6

1 Timothy 4:12

2 Timothy 1:7

Hebrews 13:2

1 Peter 3:15

Quote: Instead of being wishy-washy people who will selfishly counteract our ethics or our doctrines on a whim, we must live joyous and holy lives that point to Jesus Christ as the lone source of our personal conduct. *Johnathan Falwell*

Groceries

A person's days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed. Job 14:5

By Jason Young

In 1973, I was three years old. My mom has some picture books with old pictures so I know I was alive, but I can only recall one vivid memory from that year. It was the day I flew out the back of my parents VW bus and landed on a bag of groceries in the middle of a road. I love food. On this day, it helped save my life.

What I intensely recall about that day was flying out the hatch, landing on a bag of groceries, hopping up and seeing a look of shock of a woman who came to a screeching halt in her blue car, narrowly avoiding running me over! I looked at her, looked at groceries that were strung out across the highway, and then started running up the road toward my mom who stopped the VW bus in the middle of the road. She jumped out of her car and started running toward me with a look of dread on her face. I did not have a scratch on me.

How was that possible? I do not remember anything else about that day. What I do know is I am still alive today. My life could have swiftly ended on that day. That was 45 years ago. God ordains our days on this earth.

Psalm 139:16- Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

James 4:13-16- Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil.

Spiritual Life

Hack # 14



Live life knowing God has ordained your days

I should do everything I can to stay alive, but ultimately my life is in His hands. Knowing this can certainly change the way we think, the activities we do and the choices we make, all the while putting our faith and trust in the Lord.

Can you recall a time of a near-death experience? Do you ever doubt that God has a plan for your life? How does it make you feel that God planned your days even before you were even born? Do you ever get angry with God about his plans?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Genesis 6:3

Deuteronomy 32:39

1 Samuel 2:6

Job 14:5

Psalm 31:15

Psalm 39:4

Psalm 90:12

Psalm 139:16

Psalm 144:4

James 4:13-16

Ephesians 1:11- In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.

Quote: Our days are numbered, and God is just waiting for you to come back to Him. *Tiffany Thornton*

Heartache

*The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made
Psalm 145:9*

By Jason Young

I have witnessed a lot of grief over the years. A classmate of mine abruptly lost her life in a car accident. Her father was the first paramedic to arrive at the site of the crash. It was an ordinary spring day. School had just gotten out. I remember we had track team practice. My classmate got in her car with a friend and was heading home. She never made it. We were all overwhelmed with heartache. The next day our school had grief counselors on site. We gathered in our school gymnasium. There were tears and sobbing everywhere. It was a terrible day. Later that same year another of my classmates died in a tragic accident after leaving a party. He flew out the back of a pickup bed and hit his head on a rock. He died instantly. I remember being at his funeral in Colorado Springs. It was a sad service full of grief and deep sorrow. Another one of my childhood neighbors died in a tragic Jeep accident a few years later. Her family was devastated.

Over the course of my life, I have seen the terrible consequences of cancer and disease. I have watched divorce crush the spirits of kids and families, the shame of sexually abused victims, the pain of domestic violence, the brokenness of abused children, families being torn apart by drug and alcohol abuse, extramarital affairs that have ruined and shamed families. And on a global level, it is magnified only more.

The common question often is often something like this. How could a loving God allow all of this pain and suffering to happen? How could He send humans to the depth of hell for all eternity? It's a valid response. It's important to understand is that the character of God is good. God is not evil. Satan is evil and is the ruler of this earth. Ultimately, I will never be able to answer the why questions. However, I do believe that God is good and that he cares for all of humanity and gives each the opportunity to respond to Him.

Spiritual Life Hack # 15



Live life knowing that
God is good

2 Peter 3:9- *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

Even in the filth and pain of this broken world, we see the goodness of God everywhere. I hate every one of the situations mentioned above. Nevertheless, I believe that God is good.

How about you? Do you believe God is good? Why or why not? What are some of the good things that you see in this world that are from God? What would this world be like if God abandoned all of creation and left humans to their own devices?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Exodus 33:19- And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

Exodus 34:6-7a

1 Chronicles 16:34

2 Chronicles 30:9

Psalms 31:19

Psalms 34:8

Psalms 69:16

Psalms 100:5

Psalms 119:68

Psalms 145:9

Matthew 7:11

Romans 8:28

Romans 11:22

Galatians 5:22-23

James 1:17

2 Peter 3:9

Quote: Yet, in the maddening maze of things, And tossed by storm and flood, To one fixed trust my spirit clings; I know that God is good! *John Greenleaf Whittier*

Marriage

Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. Ephesians 5:25

By Jason Young

I have a fantastic wife. Our story began in 1994. I was living in an apartment complex in Tigard, Oregon. At the time I was very busy with school and work. I was involved with a church in Beaverton, and that is where I met Shauna. It was a college/career group. The truth of that matter is that *she* first liked *me*. I was not interested in her initially. One of my best friends growing up was living with me at the time, and we would often hang out with other friends from the church group at the time. Shauna was part of that church group. As a group, we had a lot of fun. We occupied our time by going to the beach, playing games, going to Baskin Robbins, watching movies, and worshipping God together at church.

As time went on my friend moved back to Colorado. Others in the social group moved on as well. One of my friends said to me that Shauna liked me and I should ask her out on a date. I had not even considered that at the time. But I made one of the best decisions of my life and asked her out. It was awesome. After a fun evening of being together, I dropped her off at her house. As I was driving home, I felt in my spirit that she was the girl I was going to marry. At what we believe to be the same moment Shauna had the same feeling. She did something very cool. She said to God, "Here is my heart. It's yours. When it is time to give it to my future husband, please give it to him." I believe that is what happened on that night. That was the beginning of a delightful courtship together which led to us getting married eight months later.

Spiritual Life Hack # 16



God desires relationships

The marriage relationship that I have had with Shauna has been incredible. We love each other. We complement each other. Marriage has helped me understand the beauty and potential of a healthy relationship. God is a God of relationship. He desires to be close with those that He created. God wants a relationship with me personally.

Revelation 3:20- Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.

How is your relationship with God? Do you intentionally spend time with Him? If not why? If you so how does that impact your life?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Colossians 2:13-14- When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.

John 1:12

John 3:16

John 14:6

John 15:5

Acts 3:19

Acts 17:27

Romans 1:23

Romans 5:8

Ephesians 2:8-9

Ephesians 5:25

Titus 3:5

1 Peter 3:18

1 John 4:10

1 John 5:13

Revelation 3:20

Quote: Christianity is a love relationship between a child of God and his Maker through the Son Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. *Adrian Rogers*

Sin

Romans 3:23- For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

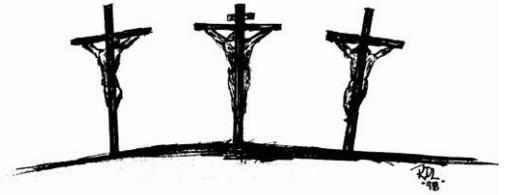
By Jason Young

I have been around sinners my whole life. They are all around me every day. I continuously see the consequences of sin in the lives of people. On a personal level, I am an expert sinner. Here are a few examples. While growing up, I stole a candy bar from the Fortune Club in my hometown. I did not pay for it. I just grabbed it, slipped it into my pocket and walked out. On a summer day, a friend and I took a beer from my parent's refrigerator. We walked over to the Gold Bowl (local baseball field), popped it open and chocked down a couple of swigs. We decided we did not like the taste of it, so I threw it into the hillside and continued with the day. When my dad got home from a hard day's work, he went to grab the beer. When it was not there, he questioned my sister and me. I told him I had no idea where it was. I knew what happened but chose to lie about it. On one occasion, I was at a friend's house with several others. The next thing I knew we were all sitting in front of the TV watching a pornographic movie. I have struggled with lust.

If that does not cover it, I found myself in the boy's locker room before lunch. I witnessed a group of bullies stuffing a younger kid into a locker. Then they walked out. I briefly thought about letting the kid out, but chose to step out and go to lunch. All I could think about during lunch was that kid in the locker, but I just sat there and ate.

Over the course of my life, I have talked behind people's backs. I have engaged in gossip. I have been hypocritical and judgmental. People (mostly my little sister) have experienced my temper tantrums and fits of ridiculous rage. I have been jealous and envious of other people. I have coveted the possessions of others. You get the idea. I got this sin thing down.

Spiritual Life Hack # 17



**Jesus is the only one
that died for your sins**

Romans 6:23- For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Gospel changes all of that, though. Jesus Christ died willingly on a cross for all of my baggage and sin. Not only for me but also for all of humanity. Jesus knows all about it, every pathetic iniquity and yet He died for it. Jesus came to save sinners.

2 Corinthians 5:21- God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

John 3:16- For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

What an incredible truth! Knowing and genuinely believing this allows His followers to live in freedom and victory. We do not have to live in brokenness and shame.

How does it make you feel to know that Jesus died for all of your sins? What are the implications of Jesus dying on a cross for your sins?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

1 Peter 3:18- For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.

Isaiah 53:3-5

Mark 10:45

John 3:16

John 10:11

John 15:13

Romans 5:8

Romans 6:10

Romans 6:23

1 Corinthians 5:13

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

2 Corinthians 5:21

Philippians 2:5-11

Quote: We must never forget that Christ did not suffer just during His three years of public ministry or the last few days of His life when He was crucified. No, He suffered throughout His life on earth. He who was without sin lived daily with the corruption and sinfulness of lost humanity.

A.B. Simpson

Beep Beep

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. John 14:26

By Jason Young

I heard a sermon in 1994 that resonated with me. One of the points was that the Holy Spirit (HS) is like a beeper. As we began to get enticed into sinful activity, it starts to beep. The closer we get to sin the more it beeps. Sometimes we are sensitive to it and flee the enticement and other times we succumb to it. Naturally, as believers, we do not go around with audible beeps, but I like the illustration.

I am a sinner. The convicting work of the HS helps me confront and deal with the sin that is all around. In my life, the HS is continuously beeping, and I need it. Many times, I walk away and do the right thing. Many other times, I ignore the beeper and jump into the fire of sin. When we sin, there are often consequences, but God certainly puts His Spirit in us to overcome those temptations.

John 16:7-8-But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

⁸ When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment:

Another point of the sermon focused on the beeps being the hands and feet of Jesus. For example, I was at a youth conference in Sacramento in 2006. I had just left my motel room when I noticed a homeless man. My first instinct was to continue to do what I was doing. Beep! The Holy Spirit put in my spirit to talk to the man. Therefore, I reluctantly did. It was an interesting conversation, but in the mist of us speaking, I was able to share some spiritual truths with the man. I have no idea if they made any difference in his life, but I felt led to talk to him.

Spiritual Life

Hack # 18



Understand that the Holy Spirit is your advocate and helper

On another occasion, I was at a laundromat in Klamath Falls. Beep! I saw a woman sitting so I asked her if I could talk to her about God. She was not opposed to it, and we engaged a spiritual conversation. After talking with her for a while, she looked at me with tears in her eyes and told me that her granddaughter had recently shared similar things. God was doing a work in her life. Later that day I saw a man come in the same laundromat. Beep! I approached him in the same manner, and before I could finish the sentence, he cursed me out with some very coarse and crude language. Afterward, I wondered if that "beep" meant to flee immediately!

Acts 1:8- But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

We should purpose to live our lives with the goal of being sensitive to the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Have you ever felt compelled to talk with someone about the Lord? How has the Holy Spirit helped you understand truth? Have the Holy Spirit ever conflicted you of your sin? If so, how did it feel? Do you appreciate the work of the Holy Spirit in your life?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

John 14:26- But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

John 14:16-18

John 16: 7-8

Acts 1:8

Acts 4:31

Acts 9:31

Romans 5:5

Romans 8:26-27

1 Corinthians 2:9-10

1 Corinthians 12:7

Titus 3:6

Jude 1:20

Quote: If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference
A.W. Tozer

The Sweatshirt

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Luke 6:38

By Jason Young

Over the years I have been on numerous short-term mission trips. Every one of those trips has had a spiritual impact on me. In 1993, a friend of mine convinced me to go on a short-term mission trip to Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. I reluctantly agreed, but it did not seem very appealing. We were going to sleep in tents, the weather was hot, showers were minimal, and it was a long drive. On top of that, I had to be in Pueblo, Colorado, for an Army drill weekend at the end of the trip. It did not appear that it was going to be a very restful or comfortable trip, but I went anyway. I am so glad I did.

As advertised, it was hot and uncomfortable. Our primary work mission was to build a house. I was very excited about constructing a home. When we arrived at the building site, I could not believe what I was seeing. I thought that I grew up as a poor kid in a rundown house. I was seriously mistaken. The homes that were in this particular neighborhood were nothing more than wood scrapes with cardboard and tin for walls and unsteady roofs. I thought to myself that these could not be houses. However, I saw families with kids everywhere. I was stunned.

Over the next ten days, we built a house. Well, kind of. It had a concrete pad for a floor (most of the homes had dirt floors), around the pad were four simple walls framed with 2x4 wood, two custom windows with chicken wire, with tin scraps attached as walls and a flat tin roof. That was it. The house we built stood out amongst the rest of the neighborhood houses. It did not have any plumbing for water and sewer, no bedrooms, no stove, no dishwasher, and no washer and dryer.

On the last day, we were in the neighborhood and the mission's agency we were working with brought in a family of four to show them their new house. I will never forget the smiling faces. They were ecstatic. It indeed was a very humbling experience. What happened next though has stuck with me vividly. One of our group members had on a Colorado State sweatshirt. It was a lovely grey sweatshirt with the Ram mascot on it. He took it off, got on his knees and called over a young girl who was moving into the house. He then handed her his sweatshirt. She had a quizzical look on her face. I have to admit my initial reaction was that I could not believe he was giving her a sweatshirt. I bet that thing cost \$20. What was he thinking? She took the shirt and began to weep with a gigantic smile on her face.

Spiritual Life Hack # 19



Give with an open hand

2 Corinthians 9:7- Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Acts 20:35- *In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'*

I learned a life lesson that day about giving. I decided that I wanted to live my life with an open hand of giving with no strings attached. All I have is from God anyway. It is His. There is such joy in giving.

Do you give to others with a cheerful heart? Do you give but with strings attached? How does it make you feel when you give to someone else or the church? Has anyone ever given to you? How did it make you feel?

Psalm 37:21- The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous give generously.

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

1 Timothy 6:17-19- Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

1 Chronicles 29:14

Psalms 37:21

Proverbs 3:9

Proverbs 11:25

Proverbs 21:26

Malachi 3:10

Matthew 6:2

Matthew 6:24

Luke 6:38

Acts 20:35

1 Corinthians 13:3

2 Corinthians 8:12

Hebrews 13:5

Quote: Money never stays with me. It would burn me if it did. I throw it out of my hands as soon as possible, lest it should find its way into my heart.

John Wesley

Church Split

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.
Hebrews 13:8*

By Jason Young

In May of 2004, I was seven years into my position at Bible Baptist Church. I was visiting my parents in Eagle Creek, Oregon, when I got a phone call from a good friend. Little did I know at the time that the next couple of years would be full of meetings, heartaches, sadness, anger, sorrow, grief, hurt, disappointment, frustration, confusion and at times a broken spirit.

One of my mentors, colleagues, and friends was going through an agonizing process of church discipline. This turmoil caused our church to split. It was like a divorce. People in the congregation took sides, and to say the least, it was quite agonizing. I had never experienced anything like it. I tried to navigate through it the best I could. I had people come against me, and people stand with me. It was a lengthy process of listening to people, crying, praying, studying and being involved with countless hours of leadership meetings. Some called me names while others stood with me in affirmation. I spent numerous hours talking with people and then I watched as they left the church in disagreement with the church leadership. I believed that I was doing what God would have me to do, but at the same time had doubt. It was not an enjoyable period.

Looking back, I navigated through some of it well, and at other times, I certainly could have handled many situations differently. I learned a few things about people during that period. First, people have many opinions, and they will let you know about them. Sometimes folks will share in stern anger, and at other times, they are motivated by pure love. I learned a lot about being a pastor in both of these scenarios.

Secondly, people will leave the church, and often there is nothing I can do about it. I have silently lamented this dozens of times as people move on. However, many people stood with the church in unwavering support even in the midst of tremendous sadness. That made all the difference in the world. Over the years many more people have left, and many new people have come to the church. What a blessing that has been! As I look back over that period, it was a tremendous time of spiritual growth for me. My role in the church changed. I matured in my faith. I hope I never have to go through that trying time again, but I am thankful for what God did in my heart and life through it all.

Spiritual Life Hack # 20



God's character never changes and he will not forsake you

Regardless of what the future holds one thing I do know is this. God will never change, and He will never leave me or forsake me.

Malachi 3:6- "I the LORD do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed."

Deuteronomy 31:6- Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."

What would happen if God continually changed? Have you ever felt like God left you? How have you grown spiritually during the hard season of your life?



Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Deuteronomy- 31:6

Joshua- 1:5

1 Chronicles 28:20

Psalms 33:11

Psalms 90:2

Psalms 94:14

Psalms 102:25-27- In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end.

Isaiah 40:28

Isaiah 43:10

Jeremiah 31:3

Malachi 3:6

2 Timothy 2:13

Hebrews 13:8

James 1:17

Revelation 22:13

Quote: Consider what you owe to His immutability. Though you have changed a thousand times, He has not changed once. *Charles Spurgeon*

Skunk

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 2 Timothy 4:7

By Jason Young

In 2010, I decided that I had waited long enough. I was 40 years old and had not run a marathon. One of my goals that year was to do just that. The most extended races I had run before that were several 15-kilometer runs. To accomplish my goal of finishing a marathon I knew that I had to train for it. I got online and found a beginner marathon plan. It started rather easy and then built up too many long runs before the actual race. I set up a calendar and strategically planned my long runs on Saturdays. Some of the longer training runs were going to take up to four hours to accomplish. I am not an elite runner, so my mantra was "*slow and steady.*" Each day of training my endurance got better and better.

Several weeks before running the Portland marathon, I had a scheduled run of 22 miles. I had never run that far before but was excited and anxious to do it. On the morning of the training run, I woke up at 4:00 am and was on the trail by 4:30 am. I had a bottle of water and some money in my fanny pack as I planned on stopping at a convenience store for some Gatorade 11 miles into my run. It was pitch black outside. I was only about three minutes into my training run when it happened.

I saw what I initially thought was a cat run in front of me. It startled me at first, but I just kept running. I sensed it was following me, so I turned back to look, and that is when the skunk unloaded on me. I do not have a good sense of smell, but I quickly realized that I stank something awful! I had a choice to make: go home or keep running. I was mentally prepared to run 22 miles, so I just kept going.

As planned, 11 miles into my run I stopped at the store to grab a drink. I sheepishly entered the store with my head down. There were several people in the store, and they all had the same look on their face. They could smell the skunk spray. It was *bad*. I tried not to laugh or smile as I was paying for my drink. It was evident that I was the cause of the awful smell. I immediately exited the store and continued on my run. As I continued, I encountered several other runners along the way who gave me inquisitive looks as we passed each other. I giggled silently and continued to run.

Twenty-two miles is long way to run. It is even longer when you smell like a skunk the whole way! We all have a race to run. It is the race of perseverance. Sometimes along the way, it's going to stink, but that should not cause us to stray away from the Lord.

Spiritual Life Hack # 21



The race of life is sometimes going to stink. We must run it anyways.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27- Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. ²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. ²⁶ Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. ²⁷ No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

How is your race currently going? Are you keeping your eyes on the ultimate prize? Are you running aimlessly or with purpose regardless of the circumstances?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Psalm 18:29

Isaiah 40:31

Luke 21:19

Romans 5:3-4

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Galatians 5:7

Philippians 3:14

Philippians 4:13

2 Timothy 4:7

James 1:2-3

James 1:12

Hebrews 12:1-2- Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ²fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Quote: Do not be lazy. Run each day's race with all your might, so that at the end you will receive the victory wreath from God. Keep on running even when you have had a fall. The victory wreath is won by him who does not stay down, but always gets up again, grasps the banner of faith and keeps on running in the assurance that Jesus is Victor.

Basilea Schlink

Lawyers Office

*Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.
Psalms 37:4*

By Jason Young

In 1996, at around 2:30 am on a chilly winter night in Hillsboro, Oregon, I was cleaning a lawyer's office. As part of my nightly routine, I had on a radio headset listening to a talk show while dusting windows blinds, emptying trashcans, vacuuming the carpet, mopping floors, cleaning sinks and scrubbing toilets. I had cleaned this office three times a week for two years. If I stuck to my routine, I could pull into the back parking lot area, unload my cleaning supplies, check the logbook for comments, clean the office and be driving out the parking lot in about 45 minutes.

This particular night was different from all of the other routine nights. I had just finished vacuuming the front area of this lawyer's office when I sat down in the foyer chair, then turned around, and got on my knees. I rarely cry, but I did that night. Tears came streaming down my cheeks. I took off my radio headset and in the silence of the night began to pray aloud to God. Although this was a good job and God was sufficiently providing for me, I was not satisfied.

In 1992, I believed that God had put it into my heart to serve Him in a full-time capacity. Up to that point, I had never even considered that as an option. I was 22 years old at Colorado State studying accounting. My motivation was to get an education, get a job and make lots of money while enjoying the luxuries of this life. However, a couple of years into my training God changed my heart. On one particular day, I was looking at jobs at a computer lab when I suddenly felt the soft, quiet voice of God. I left the computer lab that day convinced that God had put it into my heart to work full-time at a Christian camp. I went back to the place I was living at the time and shared this with my roommates. They were all Christian friends and were supportive, but they also seemed skeptical about it.

Four years later I am in that lawyer's office crying and praying. I was disappointed in God. At the time, all I could see was my current circumstance. I had a commercial cleaning business, worked late nights, was single, bored, confused and dissatisfied with what God was doing in my life. In my heart and soul, I knew that God called me into ministry but instead here I was cleaning toilets, and vacuuming floors in the middle of the night with nobody around. Therefore, I decided to have a pity party all by myself before God. As I cried out to God with a broken spirit, my demeanor changed. I began to worship Him. He was my King, and I decided if this is what He wanted me to do then I would do it. Eventually, I got up and moved on as I had more cleaning to do.

Spiritual Life

Hack # 22

GOD'S PLAN

Always believe that Gods plan is the best

Within the next week, my circumstances began to change. I had lunch with one of the pastors of the church I was attending. I shared what was going on with me. He gave me some suggestions and advice, which set into motion the ultimate plan that God, had for me. Before I knew it, I was married and moving to Klamath Falls to start a full-time position at a Mountain Lakes Bible Camp in Klamath Falls, Oregon.

Proverbs 19:20-21- Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end, you will be counted among the wise. ²¹ Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.

Do you trust God with the plan he has for your life? If so praise the Lord if not bring your concerns to the Lord in prayer? What are your current plans? How do they line up with Gods plan for your life?

Romans 8:28- And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Psalm 37:4
Psalm 138:8
Proverbs 3:5-6
Proverbs 16:19
Proverbs 19:20-21
Micah 6:8
Matthew 6:25-34
Romans 8:28
1Thessalonians 5:18
Hebrews 10:36
Hebrews 11:6
Hebrews 13:20-21
James 1:5
2 Peter 3:9

Psalm 48:14- For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end.

Quote: The Spirit-filled life is not a special, deluxe edition of Christianity. It is part and parcel of the total plan of God for His people. *A.W. Tozer*

Hospital room

But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. Isaiah 40:31

By Jason Young

Over the course of my life, I have been on two helicopters. My first flight took me to Saint Francis Medical Center in Colorado Springs. The 20-minute trip cost \$7,500. I was then transported to an ambulance that drove me roughly 500 feet. That ride cost another \$800! Eventually, I found myself on an operating table in a bright room with several people in white suits and masks. I could hear voices talking, and what sounded like a drill and a burnt flesh-bone smell. While this was going on, I felt like my body was floating around the ceiling. It was a bizarre sensation caused by drugs. I remember thinking that what they were doing hurt. I should be screaming, but I was lying still in the bed.

I eventually woke up in a recovery room. I noticed that I had a metal rod going through my upper leg right above my left kneecap. This was connected to an elaborate pulley system with weights attached at the end of the arrangement. The medical personnel put me into traction to straighten out my broken femur. I laid in that bed for the next nine days waiting for the swelling in my leg (which looked like a big balloon) to go down so they could perform surgery and insert a 16-inch rod inside my femur to promote stability and healing. Those nine days in that bed seemed like an eternity. I could not get out of bed so going to the bathroom was quite attention-grabbing. The leg was causing a lot of pain, so every few hours a nurse would come to administer some Demerol, which would cause me to asleep quickly.

The time in the hospital room seemed to drag on endlessly. I had many friends visit me. I was jealous as they left knowing that they were going to enjoy the warm summer day that I could only view through my window. My parents and sister came and went. Eventually, the swelling subsided, and the bone was positioned to the satisfaction of the doctors. I was ready for surgery. It was such a relief to be free from the traction apparatus. The surgery went well, and before I knew it, I left the hospital room and was heading home to start the long recovery process.

Spiritual Life

Hack # 23



Learn to wait patiently in the Lord

I learned a lot about patience as I laid in that bed. Learning to wait patiently on the Lord is vital in our walk with Him. Sometimes it can be painful, long, and confusing. However, it's in those times that we can either draw closer to God or choose to distance ourselves from Him.

Psalm 27:14- Wait for the LORD, be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.

How are you doing in the area of patience? Do you have a hard time trusting the Lords timing? What advice would you give people in this area? Is there someone you could encourage or build up with as they try to wait patiently for something?

Psalm 5:3- In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly.

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Psalm 5:3

Psalm 25:5

Psalm 27:13-14

Isaiah 40:31

Lamentations 3:24-26

Micah 7:7

Luke 12:35-40

1 Corinthians 4:5

1 Corinthians 15:58

James 1:12

James 5:7-8

Isaiah 30:18- Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him

Quote: Do not let the loud utterances of your own wills anticipate, nor drown, the still, small voice in which God speaks. Bridle impatience till He does. If you cannot hear His whisper, wait till you do. Take care of running before you are sent. Keep your wills in equipoise till God's hand gives the impulse and direction.

Alexander Maclaren

Baker City

You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. Psalm 16:11

By Jason Young

One of my great pleasures in life has been coaching high school basketball. I started playing the game at a young age and over the years; I have enjoyed playing, watching and coaching it. I have officially coached in 288 regular season games. I have coached numerous summer league and team camp games, as well as overseeing hundreds of practices. As a player, I played in over a hundred games while being involved with everyday practices.

I have copious memories of being involved with basketball. As a player, I vividly remember my coach chaining the gym door shut with a lock. Several team members were late, and he made it a point to teach them a lesson. Once he let them into the gym, they spent the next hour and a half running. From that day on everyone was early to practice. On another occasion, our starting point guard and one of our team captains took off his warm-up jacket, unveiling a yellow tie on top of his red jersey. It looked awful. It did not take long for everyone to notice it, including our coach. Everyone but Coach thought it was funny. The player got a severe scolding for his actions. He was standing up for another player on the team who had forgotten his mandatory tie. We learned that there are often better ways to protest a disagreement.

On yet another occasion, our coach lost his mind as he threw a clipboard on the floor. He proceeded to call each of us liars and said we were failing to meet some of our goals. He then benched us. I learned the importance of setting realistic goals. Although my coach was tough on our team, my years of playing were some of the most excellent times of my life. I learned about hard work and sacrifice, being a good teammate, overcoming adversity, dealing with emotions, enjoying the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat.

One of the many highlights of my coaching career was the 2010-11 season. We had a seasoned group of seniors and some talented underclassmen. We won our league and came out of districts with the number one seed. Being seeded first insured us a home game. If we won that game, we would advance to Baker City for the final bracket. We beat our opponent in a very intense contest. The next week was a fantastic experience. Our team won a semifinal matchup game on a buzzer-beater after coming back from a 15-point deficit in the second half. The next night, however, we lost in the state championship game. It was a heartbreaking loss. There are feelings of agony in some losses. However, one thing I remember the most about the locker room after that game was when we gathered in a circle to pray. Yes, we were disappointed, but there was also a sense of appreciation and thankfulness to God for the opportunity and the journey that we had. It was a distinct moment. Yes, we lost the state championship game, but we also were thrilled to have the opportunity to play it.

Spiritual Life

Hack # 24



Find joy in the wins and losses of life

Philippians 4:4- Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

What are some of the great joys in your life? What are some of your biggest disappointments?



Psalm 30"5- For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Nehemiah 8:10

Psalms 16:11

Psalms 1:1-3

Psalms 28:7

Psalms 30:11

Psalms 30:5

Psalms 47:11

Proverbs 10:28

Isaiah 61:10-11

Romans 15:13

Galatians 5:22

2 Corinthians 4:7-10

Philippians 4:4

Hebrews 12:2

1 Peter 1:8-9- Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Quote: If you have no joy, there's a leak in your Christianity somewhere.

Billy Sunday

Death

You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. Psalm 16:11

By Jason Young

Ever since an early age, I have experienced the sting of death around me. It started with the passing of my biological dad. Other than seeing pictures of him, I do not remember anything about him. All we know is he went to Mexico and never returned. Two of my classmates lost their lives in separate car accidents. Both of those accidents were heartbreaking. All of my grandparents have passed away.

I have mourned with and prayed for hundreds of people and families who have had to deal with death. Some of these have included unbearable tragedies. I have shared the grief at a funeral of a young girl who lost her life in a tragic drowning accident and received the news of a church member who tragically lost his life in a motorcycle accident. I have attended multiple funerals where students that I knew personally took their own lives. I've watched as the beautiful souls of several people have dealt with the destruction of cancer, and have been a grief counselor at a school that lost three students to a horrific train accident. I've prayed with a family coping with the loss of their grandson resulting from choking on an object and sat in a courtroom listening to a guilty verdict as an ex-player of mine was sentenced to a murder. I've watched a beloved pastor of mine die from the devastating effects of leukemia and shared the pain of a family and friends grieving over a loved one who took his own life with a gunshot.

I have also mourned with dozens of people who have lived a long life but passed away. I dearly miss many of them. They were such faithful folks, friends, and encouragers, so full of joy with great wisdom to share. As with so many others, I have witnessed through news outlets and social media the countless acts of violence that have taken the lives of so many innocent people. The pain of losing soldiers in war, the loss of life from random acts of violence throughout the world, severe famine, disease, etc. The countless stories we hear about from all over the world can be heartbreaking.

Spiritual Life

Hack # 25



Live life with an eternal perspective

It is evident that death is something that all people encounter. I do not like the reality of death but do understand that my days on this earth are short. I will die. The Bible teaches us how short human life is. We are here for one moment and gone the next. What is exciting is the promise of eternal life with Jesus. Living our lives in anticipation of Heaven certainly helps us cope with the sting of death.

1 Corinthians 15:55- "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

How do you cope with the pain of death? Do you have eternal hope? Have you considered how fleeting life

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Psalm 16:11
Psalm 39:1-7
Proverbs 11:30-34
Matthew 7:13-14
Matthew 24:13-14
1 Corinthians 15:55
2 Corinthians 5:8
Philippians 1:23
Philippians 3:20
1 Thessalonians 5:23
1 Timothy 6:12-14
1 Peter 1:4
1 Peter 1:13-15
Titus 2:11-13
1 John 5:13-14
Revelation 3:5-9

Colossians 3:2- Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things..

Quote: The end we ought to propose to ourselves is to become, in this life, the most perfect worshippers of God we can possibly be, as we hope to be through all eternity. *Brother Lawrence*

Crutches

I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take some of the power of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them. They will share the burden of the people with you so that you will not have to carry it alone. Numbers 11:17

By Jason Young

So far, in my life, I have needed to use crutches for about 150 days. On most of those days, I needed them to get from one location to another. A broken femur, severely sprained ankle and the repercussions from knee surgery put me in this predicament.

After breaking my femur in a car accident, I had surgery to insert a 16-inch rod in my leg to help heal the bone. The first three months after surgery I needed crutches to get around. Learning to navigate stairs, uneven ground, maneuvering around the bathroom, getting to my bed, going through doors, getting in and out of cars were all part of the process. At first, each of these tasks was quite the challenge. However, with many opportunities to practice, these tasks became more natural. I got to the point where I could navigate around very quickly. Without the two aluminum crutches, I would not have been able to get around at all. They gave me the freedom to move on my own without the help of other people. Although there were some consequences from using the crutches such as sore armpits, fatigued arms, and shoulders they were a great tool.

After severely spraining my ankle while playing basketball at an Army base in Germany I found myself again with a set of crutches. This time the Doctor that looked at the ankle wanted me on them for two weeks minimum. Once again, the crutches helped me navigate around the base. I was able to make it to the dentist office for a root canal, up and down stairs to the dormitory, around the mess hall, etc.

In 2013, I had knee surgery to fix a problem with my patella tendon. The crutches helped me get around for the next six weeks as the knee healed. It was not a fun process, but the crutches made it possible to move around.

Spiritual Life

Hack # 26



Allow others to help you when needed

Each of these situations was difficult. I needed help. My routine changed, and I could not get around unless I had support. I have found that the Christian life is similar. There are times that we need help from others. Sometimes the burdens we bear are too heavy for us to carry alone. Often we find ourselves in situations where we do not know what to do. Perhaps, we are straying off the path that God has for us, someone comes along and helps redirect our journey. God never intended for humans to go it alone. We all need help at one time or another. Crutches can be great, but other people can even be better.

Galatians 6:2- Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Can you think of a time that someone came alongside and helped you? How did that make you feel? Has there been a time where you have reached out and helped someone? Is there someone in your life that you can help? Do you need help with something?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Exodus 18:14-15

Numbers 11:17

Psalms 10:4

Proverbs 11:14

Proverbs 12:15

Proverbs 20:18

Matthew 8:5

Matthew 11:28

Matthew 25:35-40

Luke 10:30-37

Galatians 6:2

Philippians 2:4

Hebrews 10:24-25

James 2:14-17

1 John 3:17

Psalm 121:2- My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.

Quote: The purpose of human life is to serve, and to show compassion and the will to help others. *Albert Schweitzer*

Close Calls

The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever. Isaiah 40:8

By Jason Young

I am delighted to be alive. God has given me life here on earth. Life is precious. As I reflect back over my life I rapidly, realize that life can end at any moment.

My first near death experience that I remember is when I flew out the back of a VW bus on a highway and landed on a bag of groceries. Miraculously, I did not even have a scratch.

On another occasion, my mom was driving my sister and me in a Volkswagen car in the dead of winter in Denver, Co. It was cold, and the heater and defroster were not working very well. My sister and I kept whining about how cold it was. The next thing I remember was waking up in an ambulance on the way to the hospital. I saw my mom with an oxygen mask on her mouth. She was laying very still, and I was petrified. We all got carbon monoxide poisoning, and we all passed out. The car continued to move and violently struck a light pole. We all recovered from that accident, but it was quite traumatic.

On yet another occasion, I was riding in a van with several other kids. The road we were traveling had spots of ice. Somehow, the van went up on two wheels, and the side door came flying open. I remember looking at the white line as we were precariously coming close to flying out of the van onto the pavement when suddenly it rocked back on to all four wheels. The whole thing maybe lasted a second or two.

On a hot summer day, I was in a favorite swimming hole alongside the shelf road outside of Cripple Creek, Co. Several of us were swimming while others who were enjoying a summer barbeque. What I remember most about that day was when I suddenly dropped into the hole, and my feet could not touch the bottom. I began to panic. My head went under the water, then I propelled myself out, and then back under I went. The situation was not going well for me; I thought I was going to drown. That is when a friend who was a few years older reached her hand out and helped pull me to the lip of the hole.

Spiritual Life

Hack # 27

TOMORROW

ISN'T

GUARANTEED

Live life knowing that tomorrow is not guaranteed.

There have been several other stories like that over the course of my life. I have learned that life is precious. Things can change in a blink of an eye. We are all but one breath away from eternity.

James 4:14- Why you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

What should you be doing today? Is there anyone that you need to forgive, talk to, have words, encourage, or apologize? Do you overthink tomorrow? If so, what should you be doing instead?

Psalm 90:12- Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Ecclesiastes 1:4

Job 8:9

Job 14:2

Psalms 39:4-5

Psalms 89:47

Psalms 90:12

Psalms 144:

Isaiah 40:6-8

1 Corinthians 7:29

James 4:13-15

1 Peter 1:24

Proverbs 27:1-Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.

Quote: Life is short. Eternity is long.
Live like it. *John Piper*

Locker Room

He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a human being, that he should change his mind." 1 Samuel 15:29

By Jason Young

Having played high school sports and coached them for many years, I have been in many locker rooms. During football season, the locker room has a distinct smell. It is a surplus of aromas radiating from dirty practice jerseys, pants, pads, socks cleats, grass, mud dirt and other unusual things. It smells like football. It is great!

You learn a lot about life in the locker room as well. Such as taking showers in front of other people. That can be a bit uncomfortable. I have seen multiple fights break out. I have seen kids stuffed in lockers. I have seen kids pushed around and bullied between classes in locker rooms. Some locker rooms are clean, and others are disgusting.

I love entering the locker room before a game. As the team prepares to take the field or court for a game, there are always several emotions. It is rare to find someone in the locker room who is not a least a little bit nervous or anxious. Some like to keep to themselves and say nothing. Many listen to their favorite playlist. Others wander around aimlessly. Some want to talk and goof around. The bigger the game, the more intense the locker room tends to be. The opposing team, families, and crowd have no idea what is going on as they await the game. It is exciting to come out of the locker room to a bunch of fans that are waiting for you.

During halftime, the emotions in the locker room usually hinge on how the game is going. Sometimes it is dead silent, other times it is a place of intensity and agitation. It is a little bit different every time. Most often at halftime, there is a discussion of what to keep doing or what or why it is not going well. Coaches share their opinions; players chime in, as a second-half team strategy comes together.

Spiritual Life Hack # 28



Our circumstance constantly change, God does not.

The end of the game is where the locker room is different game after game. For example, if you just won the game on a buzzer beater, everyone is upbeat and excited. People are laughing and joking with each other. It is indeed a remarkable experience. If you lose on a buzzer beater than the locker room is entirely different. You are more likely to see tears, heads hanging low, a somber attitude. The locker room itself did not change, but the result of the game determines what the vibe is going to be at the end of the game.

Malachi 3:6- "I the LORD do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.

What do you think this world would be like if God changed daily? Do you find encouragement in the fact that God does not change? Are there any life changing circumstances that you need to trust God?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Joshua 1:9

1 Samuel 15:29

Psalm 18:2

Ecclesiastes 3:1

Lamentations 3:21-23

Malachi 3:6

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Hebrews 6:19

Hebrews 13:8

James 1:17-Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

Quote: Nothing can alter the character of God. In the course of a human life, tastes and outlook and temper may change radically: a kind, equable man may turn bitter and crotchety: a man of good-will may grow cynical and callous. But nothing of this sort happens to the Creator. *J.I. Packer*

Ocean

This is what God the Lord says—the Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out, who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it. Isaiah 42:5

By Jason Young

One of my favorite childhood memories was going to the ocean. Growing up in Colorado, we were approximately 1500 miles to the Oregon Coast where my parents would take the family on summer vacations. Over the years, we made several different routes to get to the Pacific Northwest. My mom grew up in Oregon so we would travel to see her side of the family. These trips were often a highlight of my summer.

I remember going through Yellowstone National Park. The gushing geysers were fun to watch notably the most famous geyser “Old Faithful.” There was wildlife everywhere, elk, bison, antelope and even bears. The majestic beauty of God’s creation was stunning. Including, lush forest, sparkling rivers, spectacular canyons, flowers, and natural hot springs.

One year we took a scenic route through Utah. One of the many highlights was Arches National Park. The famous red sandstone arches were remarkable. I had never seen rock formations quite like those. The color of the rocks were unique.

On another occasion, we visited a section of the Grand Canyon in Arizona. As a kid, I did not quite grasp the enormity of such an impressive canyon. Other adventures brought us to the four corners area, Lake Powell, Glacier National Park, and Mesa Verde Park to see the cliff dwellings, Hoover Dam, and many other cool places.

The majority of these trips I was in a camper above the cab of the pickup truck with my sister and stepsiblings. We would lay and peer through the small windshield that allowed us to see what was out in front of us.

As fun, as all of the previously mentioned things were, the destination that excited me the most was when I knew we were getting close to Pacific Ocean. It often seemed like we would never get there! Often fighting with my siblings as we agitated each other in our uncomfortable proximity to each other. My goal was to be the first one to spot the ocean. I thought it was one of the coolest things to see. It was hard to stay awake through the windy coastal roads, but I forced my eyes to remain open. I was never disappointed when I first spotted it. Water as far as I could see. Once we stopped, I would pile out of the camper and often take off running; I wanted to be the first one on the beach, to hear the impressive roar of the ocean, to feel the mist of the water and watch the waves come crashing ashore.

Spiritual Life Hack # 29



Enjoy your life journey in God’s creation.

Ultimately, for believers, Heaven is the ultimate destination. However, while here on earth we should enjoy each day as it is. Enjoy the beautiful creation all around. The worries of this life often hamper the journey it does not need to be that way.

Genesis 1:1- *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth*

What are some of the things you most enjoy about creation? What are some of your favorite things you have seen? What would you like to see? Are you amazed at what God has created?



Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Genesis 1:26-28

Genesis 9:17:

Job 37:14-16

Psalms 8:1-4

Psalms 95: 3-5

Psalms 96:11-12

Psalms 139:14

Ecclesiastes 2:24-25

Ecclesiastes 11:9

Isaiah 40; 26

Isaiah 42:5

Psalm 96:11-12- Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it. Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.

Quote: "I really try to enjoy life and have joy with what I do." *Tim Tebow*

Rest Stop

This is what God the Lord says—the Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out, who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it. Isaiah 42:5

By Jason Young

Have you ever been scared? Even though I believed, I was safe I found myself in a situation that I had never been in before. Everything was going according to plan until the car stopped. Not that a car stopping should be that big of a deal, but the circumstances itself made me nervous. It was pitch black outside. Two men in the front seat of the car were talking, but I could not understand them. I looked out the back window and could see several large semi-trucks screaming down the highway. They looked like military trucks. The next thing I knew the two men in the front of the car got out, opened the back car door, and were pointing at me to get out. These two men picked me up at the airport, and I began to have thoughts that I got in the car with the wrong people. My heart was pounding in my chest. What I did not know then that I know now is we were at a rest stop. The two men guided me to the outdoor restroom. We had been in the car for a couple of hours, and they figured it was time to stop.

I have been to many rest stops over the course of my life. However, this was the first one I had been to in China. I was 5,000 nautical miles from my home with people that I did not know and could not understand in the middle of the night. I purposefully put myself in this situation. I was in route to meet up with Pastor Ben for a bible distribution in the Shandong province of China. He was familiar with the men I was with, and they had a plan to drive me from the Beijing airport to Jining China.

Spiritual Life

Hack #30



Live life know that God is your refuge and shelter.

I made it safely, and I had an unbelievable experience on that trip. The trip was indeed one of the many highlights of my life. I would have missed out if I were not willing to take a risk. Overall, the risk were minimal, but I still had to trust others. Ultimately, I had to trust the Lord. I would have preferred traveling with others, but it was also a vibrant time for me spiritually.

Ultimately, the Lord is my protection. My life is in His capable hands!

Psalm 91:1-2- *He who takes refuge in the shelter of the Most High will be safe in the shadow of the Almighty. ² He will say to the Eternal, "My shelter, my mighty fortress, my God, I place all my trust in You."*

Do you trust the Lord with your life? What is His ultimate protection? What has fear held you back from doing? Is there something you should do now?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Deuteronomy 31:6

2 Samuel 22:3-4

Psalm 20:1

Psalm 46:1

Psalm 57:1

Psalm 91:1-2

Psalm 140:4

Isaiah 41:10

Isaiah 42:5

John 10:28-30

2 Corinthians 4:8-9

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

2 Thessalonians 3:3

**Psalm 34:19- The
righteous person may
have many troubles, but
the Lord delivers him from
them all;**

Quote: When we stray from His presence, He longs for you to come back. He weeps that you are missing out on His love, protection and provision. He throws His arms open, runs toward you, gathers you up, and welcomes you home. *Charles Stanley*

Dogs

The LORD is gracious and compassionate; slow to anger and rich in love. Psalm 145:8

By Jason Young

I still remember the names and their personalities. There was Blossoms, Seth, Ginger, Chunk, Face, and Marigold. I spent a lot of time with these loyal companions while growing up. Each of these dogs had a unique look and personality. To wake me up in the morning, my mom would often unleash Blossoms to “go wake up the boy” She found great joy pouncing on me while frantically licking my face to make sure I got up to go to school. Blossoms was a friendly collie dog.

Ginger and Seth were always with me. They both liked to catch small rocks in their mouth. I would find a little rock throw it lightly at them and they would gobble it up and spit it out while quickly looking for the next rock. I felt safe when I was with them. Seth was my protector. He had my back. He protected me from other animals and other people if he thought they were a threat. Ginger had a sweet spirit and was always ready to play. She loved going to the park with me. If I was in the backyard, she was right next to me. If I was riding my bike, she was always trying to keep up.

I will never forget the day when a local rancher killed Seth and Ginger. They were chasing his cattle, and he decided to dispose of them. It was devastating. I lost two of my favorite companions. They were part of the family, and we missed them dearly. The local rancher had the right to protect his cattle but his decision to kill our dogs greatly saddened us. As a family, we were angry, but that anger was not going to bring them back to us.

Eventually, we got Bandit, and he was probably the only dog that we never liked. He just did not fit in with our family like the other dogs. He was always running off causing trouble with our neighbors, so we found him a better home.

For my sisters, 16 birthday my parents decided to get her a small house dog. We named her Chunk. Chunk eventually had two puppies Marigold and a super cute dog with an adorable face. We called him Face. Although these dogs spent their time in more, proximity to our house and did not venture out as much as the other dogs they were also great companions.

We can learn many things from dogs. They often show unconditional love. They show significant loyalty to their loving owners. They are willing to do what they can to protect you. They are great companions. They show great joy and enthusiasm when you have been gone, and you return. They are quick to forgive and do not hold grudges.

Spiritual Life Hack #31



Be encouraged by who God is

We see the same kind of things in our God. He is loyal, compassionate, faithful, gracious, abundant in love, willing to forgive sins and to abound in fervent love.

Micah 7:18- Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy.

Exodus 34:6-7a- And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin.

How does it make you feel that God forgives your sins? What would it be like if God stayed angry forever? How have you seen the compassion and mercy of God in your life?



Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Deuteronomy 4:24-31

2 Samuel 22:32-34

Job 12:7-10

Psalms 18:30

Psalms 68:19-20

Psalms 116:5

Psalms 145:8

Micah 7:18

Micah 7:18-19

Matthew 6:26

1 Corinthians 10:13

James 1:17

2 Peter 3:9

1 John 1:5-This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

Quote: By the cross we know the gravity of sin and the greatness of God's love toward us. *John Chrysostom*

Stupid

The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is majestic. Psalm 29:4

By Jason Young

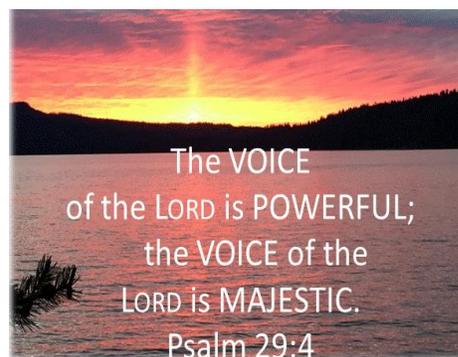
The voice of the enemy is powerful. Your stupid, not good enough, everyone is smarter. I was not an excellent student. I graduated high school and college, but it was a struggle. Taking test was the worst part of it. Even when I thought, I knew the material I still struggled to come up with the correct multiple-choice answer. Even when I knew that "A" was the correct answer, I often would doubt it; "B" might be better or is it "C." My heart would start beating doubt would creep in. I hate test. Then there was the True or False sections. At least I had a 50-50 chance of getting the correct answer. The process would start all over again. The correct answer appears to be "true," but I bet the teacher is trying to pull a fast one maybe I better put "false." The heart racing, doubt settling in, frustration in my brain. Then the nagging voice of the enemy. You are stupid Jason!

Taking the "SATS" and "ACT" test were just as miserable. Same process. Same doubt. I did not do well on either test. Universities typically like high-test scores and great GPA's. Mine were all average. Nothing special. You are stupid Jason! My best friend almost had a perfect "SAT" score. Most of my classmates had better test scores than me. You are stupid Jason!

This struggle of feeling stupid reared its head throughout my life. For example, my dad tried to show me how easy it was to change the starter in my car. There were only three bolts. Easy fix. Well not for me. I tried but what should have been easy fix turned into anger and frustration. On many other occasion over the years how a simple project turned into a nightmare of failure. You are stupid Jason!

There have been many times where it seems everyone is smarter than me. Some people make everything look easy. Now I know this is not true. I am not stupid. My mind works the way God made it to work. Somethings do not come naturally easy for me. Other things do. I have a knack for common sense solutions.

Spiritual Life Hack #32



Listen to the voice of God and not the voice of Satan

What I do know is I am not stupid. Satan continually uses that voice of negativity in my life though. The enemy has used that tactic against me for years. That voice does nothing to enhance my life. I have come to understand that this is a tactical scheme of Satan.

Ephesians 6:12- *We are not waging war against enemies of flesh and blood alone. No, this fight is against tyrants, against authorities, against supernatural powers and demon princes that slither in the darkness of this world, and against wicked spiritual armies that lurk about in heavenly places.*

I have chosen to live out who I am in God. The voice of God is much more powerful and truthful. Whose voice are you listening to?

How has Satan tried to discourage you? What are some of your favorite Bible verses reminding you who you are in Christ? How does this encourage you?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Truth about God

Psalm 29:4

Psalm 143:10

Isaiah 30:21

Isaiah 48:16-17

Luke 11:28

John 6:63

John 8:47

Romans 8:8:14

1 Corinthians 2:14

John 10:27-My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

Truth about the enemy

Luke 8:4-12

Job 1:8-11

Zechariah 3:1-2

John 10:10

Ephesians 6:12

1 Thessalonians 2:18

Revelation 12:7

Matthew 16:23- Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

Quote: In order to know God, we must often think of Him; and when we come to love Him, we shall then also think of Him often, for our heart will be with our treasure. *Brother Lawrence*

Sun Burn

The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is majestic. Psalm 29:4

By Jason Young

I love snorkeling. I do not go very often but the times I gone have been memorable. In 2009 my folks sent us to Hawaii. Micah was in first grade at the time, and that was the first time he went snorkeling. He had a life jacket on so did not get to dive under the water, but we was able to float around and look at the colorful sea creatures. I swam right next to him enjoying the warm water, Hawaii sun and sea life that was alive below us. The summer of 2017, we saved for another Hawaii trip. Throughout our time in Hawaii, Micah and myself went to several different beaches and once again enjoyed our time snorkeling together. Each time out, I made sure that both of us took the precautionary measures of not getting sunburned.

The first time I went snorkeling, was in Panama City, Panama. It was in the summer of 1992. The United States Army brought my unit to this strategic location to go through a two-week jungle-training program. The training was a lot of fun, but it was not easy. I felt fortunate that it was only a training exercise. Not having real bullets flying at me made my time in Panama more enjoyable.

Before starting the training program, we were able to visit a local beach. I had never been in such warm ocean water. The beach we were at had snorkeling gear, so several of us decided to try it. We took off our shirts and were in the water for a couple of hours. The sun was beating down but at the time being in the water felt so refreshing. Unbeknownst to us at the time was that suffered significant sunburns to our exposed skin. Mainly our backs and necks.

The next day we started our training, and it was miserable. I had to carry a bulky communication radio on my back as well as my weapon and other gear as we set off to navigate through dense jungle conditions. It was not easy. My back felt like it was on fire and my squad leaders did not care. We had a mission and needed to accomplish it. Several of us who went snorkeling the day prior felt each other's pain. It was a long two weeks of intense training, sleeping in rain-soaked conditions, sweating from the humidity, and dealing with a painful sunburn.

I learned a valuable lesson that day. I was never going to allow myself to be sunburned like that again. When I go snorkeling, I do it with a shirt on, I put sunscreen on exposed skin, and I enjoy it! I was very adamant about teaching Micah about the dangers of the sun.

Spiritual Life Hack #33



You are in a war learn how to protect yourself

The sun can be extremely dangerous. The schemes of Satan can be more dangerous. Satan has nothing good in mind. He wants to harm us any way he can; fortunately, the Apostle Paul gives us great advice on putting on the full armor of God to protect us from these potential damaging schemes.

Ephesians 6:13-18- Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

How are you at putting on the full armor of God? What area of your life does Satan seem to attack the most? Should you seek prayer or help from a fellow believer?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Joshua 1:9

Psalm 44:15

Psalm 91:1-4

Isa 54:17

Zechariah 4:6

Matthew 16:18

John 10:10

John 16:33

Romans 8:31

Romans 13:12-14

1 Corinthians 10:13

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Galatians 5:17

Ephesians 6:13-18

2 Thessalonians 3:3

James 4:7

1 Peter 5:8-9

1 John 3:8- The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

Quote: If you are a Christian, you are at war. But our approach to spiritual warfare usually falls into one of two extremes - either we place an undue emphasis on Satan and his powers or we completely ignore the existence of a personal enemy. *Chip Ingram*

Mine Shaft Adventures

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. Ephesians 4:7

By Jason Young

I grew up in Victor, Colorado. The town's elevation is 9,708 feet. The city of Victor had all kinds of different mountains and hills to hike. I spent hours exploring the old hills filled with billions of dollars in Gold. It was common to stumble upon old tailing piles, open mine shafts, open caves in the side of the hills and old mine headframes. In the mid 1970-80's many of these holes and caves were not sealed off. It was a unique place to grow up. It was fun to explore and at time very dangerous. I vividly remember either walking up to or low crawling up to the edge of old mine shafts and peering over the edge and not being able to see the bottom. My heart often felt like it was going to jump through my mouth, but I would do it repeatedly. I loved throwing rocks down these shafts while listening to the rock bounce off the walls until I could hear it no longer. Sometimes I could hear a splash as the rock hit water. It was a strange adrenaline rush, but I liked it as I threw thousands of rocks down these shafts growing up.

The scariest moment I had with these open mine shafts is when I decided to crawl between two of them that were only a few feet apart from each other. To get to these two shafts, I first crossed over a broken barbwire fence. That was my first mistake. I do not remember precisely why I felt compelled to do this, but I crawled in-between two shafts that were surprisingly close to each other. I could see the bottom of one of the shafts, but the other shaft seemed bottomless as I could hear a rock bouncing off the walls for a long time and then hearing nothing. As I lay on my stomach between the two shafts, fear beset me. I was in a precarious situation. I was breathing heavy and too scared to move. My sister was not very helpful as she was freaking out about the situation while letting me know what an idiot I was for doing that. After a lengthy time, I mustered up the courage to slither backward enough to free myself from the predicament. I grabbed some more rocks and tossed them in the deep shaft as I caught my breath. I was fortunate that day. I put myself in a dangerous situation for no reason. It was a lack of proper judgment! My sister gave me quite an earful, and I deserved it.

Unfortunately, our local community made the news several times because of people that fell to their deaths in these dangerous mineshafts. After these deaths, there was a concerted effort to secure and seal off many of these perilous shafts and open caves.

It was by the grace of God that I never had a serious or fatal accident around these shafts. I spent countless hours around them growing up.

Spiritual Life Hack #34



Be appreciative of God's gift of grace

On a spiritual level, I am so thankful for God's grace in my life. By His grace, He has offered me the gift of salvation. I do not deserve the reward, but He provided it. I am glad that I accepted it.

Ephesians 2:8- For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God

Are you appreciative of God's grace? Have you accepted his gift of salvation? How have you been a recipient of God's grace in your own life?



Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Acts 15:11

Romans 3:20-24

Ephesians 1:6

Ephesians 2:8

Ephesians 4:7

Ephesians 2:8-9

2 Corinthians 12:8-9

Hebrews 4:16

James 4:6

Titus 2:11

John 1:16- Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given.

Quote: If life has not made you by God's grace, through faith, holy--think you, will death without faith do it? The cold waters of that narrow stream are no purifying bath in which you may wash and be clean. No! no! as you go down into them, you will come up from them. *Alexander Maclaren*

Micah

Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. John 15:13

By Jason Young

I have one son. His name is Micah Thomas Young. He is a huge blessing in my life.

I distinctly remember the day we found out Shauna was pregnant. I was finishing a shower while going through the first sermon in my head that I preached at Bible Baptist Church. I was nervous yet prepared and excited. As I was drying off from the shower, my wife showed me a pregnancy test that said she was pregnant. We were thrilled! I was not sure what to think at first. We had been trying for a while, but it seemed like it was not going to happen. I still was not convinced, but later we confirmed that the test was correct. God had other plans for us!

The process of a child being conceived and growing in a mother's is impressive to me. I enjoyed all of it. It was a lot of fun letting our families and friends know that we were pregnant. Going to the Doctors' appointments were exciting and educational. Seeing Micah for the first time through the ultrasound technology, putting my hand on my wife's belly as he kicked her, preparing our home for him, learning about car seats, bottles, nutrition, and strollers was enjoyable. It was fun reading books and articles all in preparation of having a child and learning what to expect.

Micah was due to be born mid-February of 2003. He came early though! It all happened very fast. I remember not knowing what to do. I was trying to be helpful to Shauna, but she was not in the mood for that. She had some choice words for me as I tried to calm her down. She was in a lot of pain. I did not enjoy seeing that. I quietly prayed and just observed and took in the miracle of the birth process.

When I first saw, Micah It looked like he was not breathing. My heart skipped a beat. The Doctor allowed me to cut the umbilical cord. My hand was quite shaky, but I got it done. That is when saw Micah take a breath. He then began to cry. It was awesome. I had a son! It is one of the great highlights of my life.

Spiritual Life Hack #35



Do not take lightly the fact that God allowed His son to die for you.

It did not take me very long to realize how much I loved him. My whole life changed on January 23, 2003. My love for him has only increased. My appreciation for God allowing his son to die for all of humanity increased dramatically after having my own son. I cannot fathom letting Micah to die for others. It is still hard for me to comprehend the extent of that kind of love. I am very thankful for it!

John 3:16- For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Do you take Gods love for you lightly? How does it make you feel knowing that God allowed His son to die for you?



Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Isaiah 53:3-6

Matthew 27:26

Luke 23:33

John 3:16

John 15:13

John 19:17-30

Luke 23:33

Philippians 2:5-11

1 Peter 3:18

Romans 5:8- But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Quote: Because the Lord Jesus died on the Cross, I have received forgiveness of sins; because the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, I have received new life; because the Lord Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of the Father, I have received the outpoured Spirit. All is because of Him; nothing is because of me. *Watchman Nee*

Lonely Places

He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." Psalm 36:10

By Jason Young

Over the years, I have sought several different areas of temporary refuge. While growing up my favorite place was the Victor Park. It was a simple park with a few pieces of playground equipment and a couple of basketball hoops. I spent countless hours at that park playing basketball. The park was my escape from the reality of life at home. There were times that I did not want to be at home so I would spend hours at this park. I spent most of the time playing basketball games. I had quite the imagination and had 8-10 different teams in my head. Each team had four players. The games consisted of two teams playing a five-game series. I announced the action of the game in my head, fouls, points, timeouts, substitutions, more often than not these games came down to dramatic last-second shots. These spectacular shots would determine who won the games. Sometimes my favorite team would hit the shot; many times, they would miss the shot. The games were unpredictable. I would even have end game interviews with players and coaches. I would often get annoyed if another kid showed up and the park and interrupted these highly contested games. Once the championship game was over, I would start a new tournament. Those were good days and great memories. It was a lonely place for me.

While at Colorado State University, I found a place in the Poudre Canyon that I liked. It was away from the busyness and stress of collegiate life. During those years, it was a time of prayer, meditation, reading of scripture. It gave me an opportunity to hike and enjoy the beauty of creation around me while spending time seeking the Lord. Those trips were some of the most intimate times I had with God. There was something special about time with Him alone away from everyone else.

When I moved to Oregon in 1993, I kept the same practice. I have found that seeking "lonely places" has been a vital part of my Christian walk. I enjoy the quiet and solitude of purposefully seeking the Lord. The Lord is everywhere. Taking the time to spend time with Him can be very rich.

Spiritual Life Hack #36



Find time to be alone with
God

As I have studied the life of Jesus Christ, I came to realize that he often withdrew to the "lonely places" to be with God the father. In the midst of doing unbelievable ministry, He took the time to retreat from the business of life. He left the crowds and his disciples to be with God. Learning that Jesus did this left a significant impression on me and I have never regretted seeking the Lord in that manner.

Luke 5:15-16- Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. ¹⁶ But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Do you schedule a time to spend with God? Where do you like to go? If you don't why not? Where are some places that you could go?

Matthew 6:33- But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Joshua 1:8-9

Psalm 1:1-6

Psalm 36:10

Psalm 91:1

Psalm 119:9

Lamentations 3:25-28

Matthew 6:6

Matthew 6:33

Matthew 14:22-23

Luke 15:15-16

John 15:4-7

Colossians 2:6-8

2 Timothy 2:15

James 4:8

Mark 1:35-37- Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

Quote: If your heart takes more pleasure in reading novels, or watching TV, or going to the movies, or talking to friends, rather than just sitting alone with God and embracing Him, sharing His cares and His burdens, weeping and rejoicing with Him, then how are you going to handle forever and ever in His presence? You'd be bored to tears in heaven, if you're not ecstatic about God now! *Keith Green*

Drugs

How much better to get wisdom than gold, to get insight rather than silver! Proverbs 16:16

By Jason Young

I have never purposefully taken drugs on my own. I grew up around drugs. I went to a public school where many kids did drugs. I watched soldiers take drugs. I have been to rock concerts where its apparent people are taking drugs. I have been at college parties as people are taking drugs. I have seen hash, LSD, mushrooms, peyote, and many pills. The drug I have been around the most though is marijuana. It was very common to see pipes, bags of weed, bong, roach clips, joints, blunts, rolling paper and other paraphernalia lying around my home while growing up. I was very hesitant of having my friends over in fear of them seeing these things.

I remember getting high as a kid. On a couple of occasions, my parents decided to smoke pot underneath a sheet while my sister and I were under it. I have to admit it was a fresh feeling. I laughed a lot and had a strange sensation that I was spinning around and around. I am not sure what others feel, but that is what I remember about it.

I remember on a couple of different occasions going on drug deals. At the time, I did not think of it as a drug deal. I had specific instructions on where to go and what to do. It was not complicated on my end. Deliver a wrapped up package receive a package and return it to my dad. I remember walking up to a trailer knocking on a door, looking up and seeing a man handing me a bundle. That was it! I never felt like I was in any danger and the operation went smoothly.

I often wonder why I did not take drugs on my own. I had every opportunity to. It was readily available to me. For whatever reason, I chose not to. I am thankful that I did not go down that road. Life is full of choices. Sometimes we make good ones, and at other times, we do not. We go through life with the possibilities of growth and prosperity as well as death and destruction. It can be a fine line. Each choice we make can have a lasting impact. I often wonder if the person I delivered those packages to had a gun, who he associated with if I was in any real danger. I have had many opportunities to smoke, swallow, and inhale all sorts of different drugs. I am glad that I never have on my own accord.

Spiritual Life Hack #37



Life is full of choices consider them wisely

Deuteronomy 30:15-16- *See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. ¹⁶ For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees, and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.*

What are some good choices you have made? What are some of the bad choices? How have these choices affected your life? What are some choices you currently need to make?

Romans 12:2- Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Deuteronomy 30:15-16

Joshua 24:15

Psalm 19:8

Proverbs 4:5-9

Proverbs 6:6-8

Proverbs 12:15

Proverbs 15:22

Proverbs 16:16

Proverbs 19:21

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

Matthew 7:13-14

Romans 12:2

1 Corinthians 10:23

Philippians 4:8

Colossians 3:17

James 1:5-8

1 Peter 5:5

Isaiah 30:21- Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

Quote: If Jesus sets the divine standard for morality, I could now have an unwavering foundation for my choices and decisions, rather than basing them on the ever-shifting sands of expediency and self-centeredness. *Lee Strobel*

Mountains

In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Isaiah 2:2

By Jason Young

The town I grew up in is 9,705 feet in elevation. Victor lies right in the heart of the Rocky Mountains. Every direction you look while in Victor you will see beautiful Mountains. These Mountains are full of various trees, wildflowers, streams, rocks, bushes, plants and wildlife. I love the mountains!

Over the years, I have enjoyed climbing several different mountains. I am not an expert mountaineer, but I do appreciate the challenge of making it to the top. In 1990, a couple of my childhood friends of mine and myself decided to climb Pikes Peak. Pikes Peak has an elevation of 14,110 feet. The beloved song "America the Beautiful" was inspired and written from its summit. The view from the top is stunning as you see majestic vistas and the plains of Eastern Colorado.

The two most popular routes to climb Pikes Peak is the Barr trail out of Manitou Springs and the Craggs trail on the Southwest side of the mountain. We decided to blaze our own path. For the first part of our excursion, we loaded up three four-wheelers with camping gear and navigated thru several miles of bumpy terrain until we got to the point we could not go any further. We set up a campsite and enjoyed each other's fellowship, good food, and laughter. The following morning we secured our gear shot an azimuth with our compass and began to climb. A grueling climb started deep in the woods. Not taking a well-traveled trail made the climb very difficult at times, as we navigated through rocky terrain, fallen trees, steep inclines, loose shale, and fatigue. The more we increased in elevation, the more difficult it was to breathe. Nevertheless, it was a memorable trip. We eventually made it to the summit! I have relished the view and the euphoric feeling of accomplishing a goal of each mountain that I have summited. The view from Pikes Peak is impressive. It makes the struggle of the climb worthwhile.

Climbing a mountain is very similar to the way life plays its self out. For example, when you are in dense forest, it is difficult to see what is in front or behind you. By taking one step at a time you go higher and higher until eventually, you come to the point of Timberline. I love when I reach the point where I am above the trees, and my view is more apparent. I can relish in the fact that I overcame many different obstacles to get to this point of the climb. I can look back with a sense of accomplishment. I can look up and see much clearer of how far I still have to go. The struggle is not over..

Spiritual Life Hack #38



We are limited in what we see.
There is an award in the future.

Our spiritual walks are very similar. Life is not always comfortable. There are going to be many challenges and obstacles along the way. However, the beauty of living for Jesus Christ is that we receive the ultimate reward at the end. There is an exhilarating feeling of summiting a mountain, but it fails in comparison to the final summit, of heaven with God. The goal is to run the race of life with endurance as we look forward to the ultimate reward.

Philippians 3:12-14- ¹²Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

What have you done where there was a reward at the end of all your efforts? How did that make you feel? Are there any areas of your life that you are having a hard time trusting God?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Isaiah 40:10

Daniel 12:3

Matthew 19:21

Matthew 25:31-36

Mark 16:29-30

2 Timothy 4:7-8

James 1:12

1 Peter 5:4

Revelation 21:3-4

Colossians 3:23-24-

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Quote: God's purpose in promising to reward with heavenly and eternal honors the faithful service of His saints is to win them from the pursuit of earthly riches and pleasures, to sustain them in the fires of persecution, and to encourage them in the exercise of Christian virtues. *C.I. Scofield*

Bitterness

A foolish son brings grief to his father and bitterness to the mother who bore him. Proverbs 17:25

By Jason Young

It is easy to look at others and covet what they have or get jealous over the strengths and success of others. It is easy to look back at some of my life circumstances and wish for something better. Our first house in Victor had no running water to the bathroom. Our bathtub had no plumbing; it hovered precariously over a drainpipe. I was dirty all the time, and I went days without baths. The house we lived in was cold. We did not have material things or modern conveniences. Many of my friends had more money than our family. They had better vehicles and houses.

I grew up with an alcoholic parent. I was around drugs. I was embarrassed to have friends over to my house. My parents fought a lot. My biological dad left our family when I was very young. He never came home and abandoned my Mom, Sister and Myself alone. My mom often had to hitchhike to work in the wintertime with two small kids in tote. I did not have a great relationship with my step dad growing up. There were times that we got along, but because of the alcohol much of the time I lived in fear. Compared to many people these circumstances are not too bad.

Overall, my life has been great. My parents genuinely loved and cared for me. I grew up in a fun community and was able to go to a tight-knit school from K-12 grade. I had great people around me at my school; I had great friends and many memories.

The Lord helped me not become bitter about stuff I could not control. I have not held grudges about my family dynamics. Jesus has been at the center of this, and it has helped me live in forgiveness and freedom.

It is easy to look at our circumstances and feel cheated. Many people have gone through way more than I ever have. I have counseled folks who have been sexually molested and abused, others who have dealt with domestic violence, people that have gone through horrific divorces, people that have had to deal with tragic loss and the list goes on.

Spiritual Life

Hack #39



Do not let bitterness take up residency in your life.

I believe that not allowing bitterness to set in and having the ability to forgive is paramount to a blessed life. It is not easy, but it sure is freeing when we let the past go and strive to honor God the best we can each day.

Ephesians 4:31- Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

Are there any circumstances that have occurred in your life that has caused bitterness? Is there anyone that you need to forgive?

Colossians 3:13- Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Job 7:11

Psalms 51:10

Proverbs 17:25

Matthew 18:21-22

Mark 11:25

John 16:33

Acts 8:23

1 Corinthians 13:4-6

Colossians 3:13

Ephesians 4:31-32

Hebrews 2:14

Hebrews 12:15

James 3:14

Proverbs 14:10- Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no one else can share its joy.

Quote: As we get close to God, he is going to reveal things in our life that aren't pretty. We'll see the patterns of bitterness, anger, manipulation, and hurt that have cycled in our relationships. *Chip Ingram*

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

2 Chronicles 10:6-7

Proverbs 10:20

Proverbs 15:1

Proverb 15:26

Proverbs 16:24

Proverbs 18:4

Proverbs 18:20

Proverbs 18:21

Proverbs 25:11

Matthew 12:35

Luke 4:22

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Hebrews 10:24

Proverbs 15:23- A person finds joy in giving an apt reply—and how good is a timely word!

Quote: Kind words produce their own image in men's souls; and a beautiful image it is. They soothe and quiet and comfort the hearer. They shame him out of his sour, morose, unkind feelings. We have not yet begun to use kind words in such abundance as they ought to be used.

Blaise Pascal

Tuesday

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. Matthew 5:14-15

By Jason Young

I have been on this earth for over 17,000 days. If I try hard, look at specific dates, pictures, videos, etc. I can remember several particular days and what occurred on that day. I tend to recall days that either something fun happened, a celebration, one specific event or something terrible that happened.

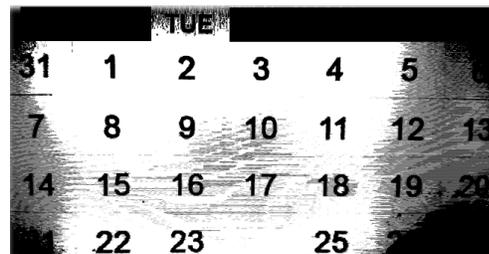
I have many fond memories that revolve around Thanksgiving and Christmas. Almost all of those memories are very positive and fun. I remember my wedding day especially the moment I saw beautiful wife walking down the aisle toward me. The day my son was born was special. I can still see his face in my mind from the moment that I first saw him. I can recall specific memories from my graduation, many sporting events, hunting trips, ski expeditions, road trips, etc.

I also can recall many specific days where something traumatic happened. For example, losing classmates to accidents, national tragedies, my car accident, the loss of loved ones, etc.

These memories are etched in my mind; it is hard for me to recall the exact day that many of these things occurred. What is even harder to remember is most of those 17,000 days. Most of those days are just regular ordinary days. Most days are like Tuesday. No one likes Monday but look forward to Friday. Tuesday is just an average day. Depending on the stage of life you are in it may entail getting up and going to work. To the same job day after day year after year. You are thankful for the job, but it is just ordinary. Maybe you are at a stage where each day revolves around school Day after day listening to lectures, taking notes, working on projects and taking test. Perhaps you are retired, settled into a repetitive daily routine.

Spiritual Life

Hack #41



Every day is an opportunity to make a difference to a lost world

Regardless of our circumstances, most days are just regular days. However, in the ordinary days, an extraordinary God should drive followers of Jesus.

Regardless, of what stage we are in God has a mission for His people. Especially in the ordinary day-to-day days. We are his hands and feet. Jesus calls us salt and light to a hurting and broken world. With that mission in mind, every day is a significant day and opportunity to spread the message of our Lord!

Romans 10:15- And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

How can you be the hands and feet of Jesus each day? What holds you back?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

1 Chronicles 16:9

Psalms 96:3

Psalms 105:1

Proverbs 10:15

Ezekiel 3:17-19

Isaiah 6:8

Isaiah 12:4

Isaiah 45:22

Matthew 5:13-18

John 14:6

Acts 13:47

Romans 10:15

2 Corinthians 5:20-21

Colossians 4:4-6

Jude 1:17-23

Romans 1:16- For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

Quote: God means every Christian to be effective, to make a difference in the actual records and results of Christian work. God put each of us here to be a power. There is not one of us but is an essential wheel of the machinery and can accomplish all that God calls us to. *A.B. Simpson*

Losing

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. 2 Corinthians 4:8-9

By Jason Young

I started cheering for the Denver Broncos in 1977. That was the first year that they made it to the Super Bowl. My dad brought the family to the Red Lantern in Cripple Creek to watch the game. Although I did not understand the game, very well I did know that I wanted the people in the orange jerseys to beat the people in the white jerseys with the stars on their helmets. The Dallas Cowboys were the better team, and the Broncos came away as losers. I was very upset about the result and even cried about it. From that day, forward losing has been a regular part of my life.

The Denver Broncos have lost 5 Super Bowls. I have watched every one of them. Every one of their Super Bowl losses have been lopsided. It was not very fun to endure, but I watched them lose anyway. I hate losing!

While growing up, I hated to lose at anything. If I failed at a game of Hearts, I would pout about it. If my sister beat me in a match of monopoly, I would throw the board in disgust. If I lost in a marble board game with my family, I would run to my room and mope about it.

When I started to play competitive sports, I experienced losing often. In fact, every sport I played I lost. I lost wrestling matches, football games, basketball games, baseball games and track events. That does not include all of the other things that I have lost.

I have coached in 288 varsity basketball games. In those contest, I have lost 88 times. Some of those losses have been painful. I have experienced the feeling of losing on a buzzer beater, being blown out by forty points and everything in-between. I have helped coach football for many years, and in every one of those years, I have experienced the pain of losing.

Spiritual Life

Hack #42



We are all losers, but Jesus is the ultimate winner, learn from Him.

What I have learned about losing is it does not define me as a person. I can fail repeatedly, and it does not change who I am in God. That is whom Jesus came. Losers. Those losing the battle with sin. We are all losers stuck in the muck of our sin. Sin causes all of humanity to fail and lose. Jesus understands that and meets us in that place of pain. He ultimately shows us how to win!

Proverbs 24:16- for though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes.

What are some of your hardest losses in life? What did you learn during that time? How can Jesus help you through the losses and failures of life?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Deuteronomy 31:8

Jeremiah 8:4

Psalms 37:23-24,

Psalms 40:2-3

Psalms 145:19

Proverbs 3:5-6

Proverbs 14:23

Proverbs 24:16

Isaiah 41:10

Micah 7:8

Romans 3:23

Philippians 3:13-14

2 Timothy 1:7

Lamentations 3:22-

**Because of the LORD's
great love we are not
consumed, for his
compassions never fail.**

Quote: We must learn to live on the heavenly side and look at things from above. To contemplate all things as God sees them, as Christ beholds them, overcomes sin, defies Satan, dissolves perplexities, lifts us above trials, separates us from the world and conquers fear of death. *A.B Simpson*

Pennies

*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.
1 Corinthians 1:18*

By Jason Young

As I reflect back on my younger years, I quickly began to realize how immature I acted at times. Being a young college student without parents in the home to hold me accountable I often did some dumb things. Living in an apartment with three other likeminded friends often caused the immaturity to go to new levels of stupidity. In our youth, we were often very loud and obnoxious. We would often have guest over which would cause the decibel level to go up even more.

It was typical for someone in our group to yell something out the window as they exited the premises. It was in a fun nature manner nevertheless it was loud and obnoxious.

Living with other roommates can be challenging. For example, everyone had different standards of a clean kitchen. That would often cause a lot of friction. The bathroom was a whole other issue.

On one occasion, I got home from an Army drill weekend to find red Kool aide stains all over the front room carpet, a fist size hole in the wall, burn marks on the kitchen floor and a sink full of dishes. I was not happy. The owners of the apartment complex was not pleased. One of my roommates decided to have a party.

Because of our immaturity, the management of the complex began to get impatient with us. They started to nag us. You are being too loud. Why are you war hooping as you leave the grounds? Although they had valid points, we were immature, so we decided to pay our rent in pennies.

At the time, our rent was \$720. That was \$180 per person. We all decided that we would go to the bank and each of us would get \$180 in pennies. Although we were not fully able to get every dollar, owed in pennies we had over \$500 in pennies. We had 50,000 pennies! To get that many pennies to the front office, we needed a wheel barrel. With the pennies in the wheel barrel, we went marching into the front office to pay rent. Management was not amused with us. We created quite the scene. They refused to take our pennies, and we stood our ground. Eventually, they won out, and we had to pay our rent more conventionally. To this day, I cannot believe that we did that, but we did.

Spiritual Life Hack #43



Learn to crave the profound things of God, leave foolishness behind

As I matured, I started doing less and less stupid things. God takes us as we are and we should grow into His likeness overtime. We should leave our immature ways and strive to mature in our faith.

Hebrews 5:12- *In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!*

What are some of the foolish things that you have done? Are you still feeding on the milk of God's word? Are you feasting on the solid food of God's word? What are you learning?

Hebrews 6:12- We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Romans 12:2

1 Corinthians 1:18

1 Corinthians 2:6

1 Corinthians 3:1-3

1 Corinthians 13:11

1 Corinthians 14:20

Ephesians 1:17-18

Ephesians 4:13-15

Colossians 1:9-10

Colossians 2:6-7

Philippians 3:13-15

Hebrews 6:12

Hebrews 12:2

1 Peter 2:1-3

2 Peter 3:17-18-Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

Quote: Ah, I have kept Him waiting when I ought not, but He has waited even then. Always waiting - so patient with my foolishness, my weakness, my fear. Our fellowship is with God, and fellowship is friendship, and friendship means that partnership which, on His part, is the accommodating of His strength to my weakness. *G. Campbell Morgan*

Step by Step

Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me. Psalm 119:133

By Jason Young

One-step at a time. As we began to walk, it does not just happen. It take practice and time. Eventually, one step turns into two steps, and two steps turns into three steps, and the next thing were walking. Of course, we fall a lot, but we get back up and get better.

An average human being who lives to be 80 years will walk about 110,000 miles over the course of their lifetime. That is roughly 216,262,500 steps! The steps we take will lead us to some unbelievable places, significant accomplishments, exciting adventures, as well into some painful situations.

For example, my steps have led me onto the stage of high school and college graduations. I married my beautiful wife after taking steps down the church aisle. I have ran many road races that required thousands of steps. My steps have led me into the bliss of a birth room to watch my son be born. My steps have led me into hundreds of venues and games where I have attended to watch others perform and excel.

My steps have brought me to the Great Wall of China, the sandy beaches of Hawaii, the summits of many mountains and the paths that have led to waterfalls, rivers, and lakes. My steps have also gotten me onto a lot of trouble! They have led me into many places of sin and debauchery, places of compromise and shame.

In 1993, I heard a song by Rich Mullins that significantly affected my life. The song is "Sometimes by Step." The lyrics resonated with me because I wanted to follow God, but it seemed like I would take one-step forward a two-steps backward in my relationship with Him.

In the chorus, a section says merely,
*I will seek You in the morning
And I will learn to walk in Your ways
And step by step You'll lead me
And I will follow You all of my days*

Spiritual Life Hack #44



Delight in the Lord as you follow Him step by step.

That is precisely what I needed. I could do that. It started by reading the Bible in the morning. Learning what it meant to walk in Gods ways. Even though I often go backward or fall God has repeatedly helped me get up and keep moving forward with Him. Not only learning about Him but also taking it a step at a time as God leads me with the desire of following Him all of my days.

Psalm 37:23- The LORD makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him

How about you? What kind of steps are you taking?

John 8:12- When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Leviticus 18:4

Deuteronomy 5:33

Deuteronomy 13:4

Joshua 22:29

Ruth 1:16

2 Chronicles 34:33

Psalms 37:23

Psalms 119:133

Psalms 128:1

Proverbs 4:27

Matthew 16:24

John 8:12

John 12:26

2 Thessalonians 3:5

Galatians 5:25- Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Quote: We are too apt to look and see how others walk, which is not faith, and to allow our own steps to be more or less affected by the walk of others around us. But in so doing, my soul is not carrying out the spirit of life in my walk.

G. V. Wigram

White Out

I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. Psalm 119:10

By Jason Young

I was hanging out the window with a small flashlight trying to determine the edge of the road. The snow was coming down hard, and it was near impossible to see anything. The vehicle that I was in was crawling at a couple of miles per hour. We were 3 hours from our destination. We were in the middle of a snow whiteout! Whiteout is a weather condition in which snow or sand severely reduce visibility and contrast. The horizon disappears altogether, and there are no reference points at all, leaving the individual with a distorted orientation. We made a smart decision to park the vehicle and wait for the conditions to get better.

I went on a spiritual retreat to Steamboat Springs, CO with Christian Student Fellowship (CSF). We had the opportunity to ski in the world-renowned champagne powder. What was even better than that was the retreat time we had learning about God, worshipping, fellowshiping, eating while having fun together. I cherish those days! CSF had a considerable impact on me spiritually.

When I first started attending CSF, I was in a spiritual whiteout. My reference point was off. The things of the world had me disoriented. I did not have a clear view of the horizon. I needed some clarity and direction. The ministries of CSF helped me get reoriented. At the center of that reorientation was the Bible.

That reorientation process was not complicated. It started with the Bible. God's word became a priority in my life. I wanted to follow Him.

Spiritual Life Hack #45



Do not let the matter of this world reduce your visibility of God.

Psalm 119:1-8- Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD. Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart they do no wrong but follow his ways. You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed. Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees! Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands. I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws. I will obey your decrees; do not utterly forsake me.

Each verse in Psalm 119 is a reminder of the beauty and wisdom of God's word. The words are eternal. They will never change. They help followers of Jesus Christ see what is essential. They help us from getting in a spiritual whiteout.

Are you seeing God clearly through His word? If so, praise Him. If not what do you, need to do to get back on course?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

1 Chronicles 16:11

Psalms 119:1-10

Psalms 119:18

Proverbs 15:3

Jeremiah 5:21

Zephaniah 3:17

John 16:33

2 Corinthians 4:4

2 Timothy 1:7

Hebrews 4:13

1 John 4:1

Revelation 1:7

Isaiah 6:10- Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”

Quote: In spite of sorrow, loss, and pain, Our course be onward still; We sow on Burmah's barren plain, We reap on Zion's hill.

Hero

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Romans 12:18

By Jason Young

I think the world of my mom. If I had to name my hero, she would be it. My mom is 5' 4" tall. She cannot leap over burning buildings, shoot webs from her hands; she does not have superhuman strength, nor does she have the ability of wonder woman. None of that matters to me.

My mom has always loved me unconditionally. She has continually tried to guide me all the while allowing me to be my person. She is very opinionated and stubborn. She cares about people. She has never made life about herself but others.

My mom left her home in Oregon when she was 17 years old to attend College in Colorado. That is where she met my dad. My dad took a trip to Mexico alone and never returned. We believe that my dad died in a drug deal gone bad. To this day, no one in the family knows what happened to him. He eventually was declared vanished and deceased. These events left my mom alone in a small mountain town, in poverty conditions with two infant children. She found a way to survive and keep us kids fed. Those were hard years!

My mom would eventually remarry to a man that she met in a bar. They got married in 1977 with my sister and me in attendance. Unfortunately, for my mom, she would have to deal with years of alcoholism, drug use, and abuse. Through it all, she showed an unconditional love toward my stepdad and people in general.

She worked at a nursing home for years. Although I did not like to visit the patients, she made my sister, and I do it anyways. Those folks adored her. She brought joy and hope to them each day. She did the same for our family as well! She supported me and my school endeavors, disciplined me when I needed it, asked for forgiveness when she messed up and challenged me to look beyond myself.

Spiritual Life Hack #46



Make your best effort to love people

Every Thanksgiving mom would invite others over. She had an open hand. She treats people with dignity and respect regardless of their skin color, situation, beliefs or circumstances. She is a great role model of how we should treat humanity.

Galatians 5:14- For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Who is one of your heroes? How can you better love your neighbor as yourself? Is it challenging to love that way? If so why?



Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Matthew 5:44-25

Matthew 25:35

John 13:34-35

John 15:12-13

Romans 12:8-10

Romans 12:18

1 Corinthians 13:1-2

Galatians 5:14

1 Thessalonians 4:9

1 Timothy 1:5

1 John 4:7-8

Matthew 22:37-39-Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.

Quote: If you love your 'Truths' more than you love people, then you are an out-and-out Pharisee. Nothing less. And you will create condemnation and death in people, rather than 'conviction' and LIFE. *Andrew Strom*

Tomorrow

"But now, Lord, what do I look for? My hope is in you. Psalm 39:7

By Jason Young

I have spent many days worrying about tomorrow. It is easy to do. The problem with worrying about tomorrow is we are not in charge of tomorrow. For example, I cannot control weather patterns. I cannot predict what people are going to do or say. I have no idea what could happen throughout the world in any given moment. I often find myself wide-awake in the middle of the night worrying. With my mind racing around and around. When this happens, it is usually about what I think is going to happen tomorrow. Perhaps, it is a meeting with an individual, a work situation, a concern about a family member, or dozens of other scenarios.

Tomorrow is the day after today. For example, if it's Monday then I know that tomorrow is Tuesday. I can look at my calendar and determine what is on the agenda for that day. That agenda may change, or it may play itself out as if I think it will. However, until it happens, I just do not know for sure.

On one occasion, I had a meeting set up to meet with an individual. I played the conversation out dozens of times in my head. If they said this, I would respond with this answer. If they said "such and such" then I would respond with a particular response. I had it all figured out. The problem is none of it went the way that I thought. It went well! Going into the conversation, I assumed it was it was going to go terrible. All of the stress and worry about it accomplished nothing.

On another occasion, I sat up at night and figured everything would go a certain way. However, everything went worse than I anticipated. I thought in my mind of how it was going to play out. I thought it was going to go well. It did not! This scenario has played out numerous of times. What I have learned repeatedly is that I do not know for sure.

Spiritual Life

Hack #47



Try and not worry too much about tomorrow.

God knows all about tomorrow! He knows everything. That may be one of the most comforting things in my life. I do not know what my future holds tomorrow here on earth, but God does. In fact, God tells us not to worry about tomorrow; instead, we should honor and recognize God today, and He will take care of tomorrow.

Matthew 6:33-34- But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Do you trust God with tomorrow? Do you tend to worry about tomorrow? What should you be doing instead of worrying?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Psalm 39:7

Proverbs 16:1-4

Lamentations 3:21-23

Matthew 6:25-34

Romans 8:18-25

Romans 15:13

2 Corinthians 4:17-18

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

James 4:13-17

1 Peter 1:3-4

Proverbs 19:20-21- Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise. Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.

Quote: Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow. It empties today of its strength. *Corrie Ten Boom*

Hand of God

*Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil,
for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
Psalm 23:4*

By Jason Young

I have doubts about many things, but the existence of God is not one of them.

I have felt the presence of God in my life for over forty years. However, there are times that doubt creeps in. I firmly believe that I can have doubt and yet have faith. My uncertainty is mostly born out of how I think things should be if they are not then I tend to question God.

I found myself in a church meeting one evening, and I was solemn and sad. Our church had just gone through a major split, and now Satan was rearing his ugly head with new attacks. I was sitting in the chair upset with God. Why this and why now? As I sat silently and prayed I began to ask this question, "haven't we been through enough already"? I started to question His presence. Does He know what is going on? God felt very distant to me like He did not care. I knew that He did, but at that moment, I seriously doubted it.

I wanted the assurance of God's presence. I did not deserve that but wanted it. That is when I suddenly felt a hand on my shoulder. It was warm and firm. It felt weighty yet comforting. I chose to keep my eyes closed as I just sat in the chair. The hand was on my shoulder for a couple of minutes. I sat in the chair in silence and as I did, my fears and worry left. Peace and comfort flooded my heart and soul.

As the hand came off my shoulder and I looked up and recognized the man from our church. He smiled, went, and sat down. At that moment in that space, God knew what I needed, and His timing was impeccable. All it took was a simple hand on my shoulder.

Spiritual Life

Hack #48



Know that God is always with you

That hand on my shoulder made all of the difference in the world to me. It was like God reached out himself from Heaven and let me know that it was going to be ok, that he was in charge and while I am at it feel my peace and presence. God is with his people always. Although, there are many times when it feels like God is not. He also tends to minister to us in extraordinary ways. On this particular night, it was a hand on a shoulder.

Psalm 91:1-2- Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

Have you ever felt that God was distant from you or didn't understand your situation? Can you think of a time that you felt the presence of God strongly? How did it make you think?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Joshua 1:5

Joshua 1:9

Psalm 23:4

Psalm 91:1-2

Psalm 113:4-6

Psalm 139:3

Isaiah 41:10

Job 34:21

Zephaniah 3:17

Matthew 28:20

Acts 17:24

Romans 8:38-39

Colossians 1:17

Revelation 21:3

Deuteronomy 31:6- Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”

Quote: In the midst of the awesomeness, a touch comes, and you know it is the right hand of Jesus Christ. You know it is not the hand of restraint, correction, nor chastisement, but the right hand of the Everlasting Father. Whenever His hand is laid upon you, it gives inexpressible peace and comfort, and the sense that "underneath are the everlasting arms," full of support, provision, comfort and strength. Oswald Chambers

Bones

"You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. Deuteronomy 5:8

By Jason Young

In March of 2018, I was able to go on a short-term mission trip to Nogales, Mexico. I had been on this trip to Nogales five previous times but the first with Shauna and Micah. It was a special trip and a great way to spend our spring break.

On one afternoon our local missionary contact took us to a town about an hour South called Magdalena de Kino.

Along the way, we stopped at a couple of new Church plants. One of the churches is located in a small place called La Mesa. The Church we visited was in a densely populated housing complex of around 5,000 people. The houses were small and tightly built to one another. The area is full of drugs. After learning about a child who was killed because of child abuse in this area, a young Pastor from Nogales was compelled to start a church. The small church is a light for Jesus Christ is a place that desperately needs the Lord.

We also visited another church that is pastored by a man who came to know the Lord while in Prison. He had gotten involved with drugs. While in prison, he got on his knees and prayed to a God that he did not know. He asked God for a Bible. The next day a Bible arrived from a member of Gethsemane Baptist church in Nogales. He began to read the Bible, learned about Jesus Christ, and surrendered his life to him. He is now a Pastor of a church located by a vast set of greenhouses where people work. The church is in a tent. His mission is to share the good news of the gospel. He shared with us how another church in Nogales, Arizona found out about this church and began to support it. A church member was able to donate money for the property and to buy a van to go pick people up so they can attend a church in a tent in an isolated area. It was an excellent experience seeing what God is doing in this remote area.

We eventually arrived to Magdalena de Kino. Our missionary friend wanted us to see the Grave of Father Kino, who died in the year 1711 and is interred in a crypt near the mission he founded. The monument was constructed in 1966 after the discovery of Father Kino's remains. People make long pilgrimages to see his remains. A pile of bones and a skull. They have an area set up where people can come, kiss, and lift up a mannequin of Father Kino with the hope of receiving a miracle.

Spiritual Life Hack #49



Christians believe that Jesus is alive, worship what is alive.

I could not help but think that people come to this remote area to worship a pile of bones. The beauty of Jesus Christ is that there are no bones! He conquered the grave! He is alive and well! The other churches we visited were all about sharing the good news of the gospel. I believe that genuine hope comes from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Hope is alive! Jesus is alive!

Psalm 81:9- You shall have no foreign god among you; you shall not worship any god other than me.

Where is your hope? Is it in a pile of dead bones or in a savior that conquered the grave? Are there any idols in your life that cause separation from God?

Romans 6:9- For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him.

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Exodus 20:4-5

Deuteronomy 5:8

Leviticus 26:1

Psalms 81:9

Psalms 106:36

Job 19:25-26

Ezekiel 14:3-4

Matthew 22:37-39

Matthew 28:6

John 20:27-29

Romans 6:9

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

Luke 24:39- Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

Quote: Because of the empty tomb, we have peace. Because of His resurrection, we can have peace during even the most troubling of times because we know He is in control of all that happens in the world.

Paul Chappel

Mistakes

For though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes. Proverbs 24:16

By Jason Young

As we navigate through this thing called life, we will all make mistakes. Some of them are entirely your fault, sometimes were in the wrong place at the wrong time, sometimes we walk into a situation with the best of intentions and still make a mistake.

Regardless, mistakes are part of life, and it is wise to learn from them. Being in full-time ministry for over 20 years, I have had many different experiences along the way.

Here is one of those experiences. I became aware of an individual who was at Sky Lakes Medical Center who had cancer and was getting ready to have his lower leg amputated. The disease had taken a brutal toll on this man. One of his friends asked me if I was willing to go up and pray for this individual before they went into surgery. I said that I would. I had his hospital room number. For whatever reason on this particular day, I did not double check the room number. I did not know how this man looked.

I entered the hospital room and saw a man lying in the bed. I introduced myself, and after some general chitchat, I asked him if I could pray for him. He thought that was a good idea. As I prayed for this man, I asked things like God; please help the surgery go well, that there would be no significant complications from the atheistic, no infections, that God would guide the hands of the surgeon, that the cancer would leave his body. I also mentioned something about him responding well to having his leg amputated at the knee.

Once I was done, praying, the man had a quizzical and concerned look on his face. He said thank you for taking the time to visit and pray with me. He then said, "I believe you have the wrong man though. As far as I know, I do not have cancer, and my leg is fine. If that is what they plan on doing to me, I am in the wrong room! I am here for a minor stomach procedure. Whoops! I sheepishly apologized and wished the man well.

Spiritual Life Hack #50



Learn from your mistakes and make better decisions next time.

I learned a valuable lesson that day. If I am visiting someone that I do not know it is essential to double check the room number, ask that individual their name, etc. I eventually did find the correct individual. I began that conversation with I am Pastor Jason and I know your friend.

Proverbs 26:11-12- As a dog returns to its vomit, so fools repeat their folly. Do you see a person wise in their own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for them.

What are some mistakes that you have made? Did you learn a lesson from them? Have you repeatedly made the same mistakes? If so, what should you do about it?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Psalm 5:10

Psalm 25:7

Proverbs 14:16-18

Proverbs 24:16

Proverbs 26:11-12

Isaiah 43:18

John 16:32-33

1 Corinthians 10:12

Ephesians 5:15-17

Philippians 3:12-16

Hebrews 8:12

James 1:5-6

2 Peter 1:8-9

Proverbs 10:23-25- A fool finds pleasure in wicked schemes, but a person of understanding delights in wisdom. What the wicked dread will overtake them; what the righteous desire will be granted. When the storm has swept by, the wicked are gone, but the righteous stand firm forever.

Quote: Life, like war, is a series of mistakes, and he is not the best Christian nor the best general who makes the fewest false steps. Poor mediocrity may secure that, but he is best who wins the most splendid victories by the retrieval of mistake
Fredrick w Robertson

Sister

Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. Matthew 5:15

By Jason Young

Have you ever met a person that is always willing to listen, encourage you, be there when you most need it and is super loyal? I hope you have. My sister is one of those kind of people. She makes a difference in the lives of the people she meets. I wish the world had more people like my sister.

It is a blessing to have a sister. We are only 18 months apart so growing up we were able to experience many things together. The good and the bad. She is very outgoing I am shy. She is a socialite and loves being around people. She never wanted to miss any high school social events. I could often care less. My hermit tendencies caused much friction between us. She would get annoyed with me for being a recluse, and I would get aggravated with her for annoying me. I admit I was not always pleasant to my sister. My sister has experienced the wrath of my quick temper. At the time, I figured she deserved it. I have mellowed out and have much better control over my anger, although it does flare up every once and awhile.

Even though we had our scums, we made the best of our living situation and had a lot of fun together over the years. We had epic campouts in the backyard, took many vacation trips together, explored our old gold mining town together, did chores together, cheered for each other, laughed together and supported each other in our endeavors. We even lived together after college for a short period. It was probably a good thing that it was a brief period as we continued to annoy each other.

Wherever Jesus went, he made a difference. His intentions were pure. In the hard conversations, he was full of compassion when he needed to stand up for what was right. He did it like a warrior. When he reached out to the sinners of this world, their lives were forever changed. When he got into it with the religious zealots, he stood his ground and did what was right.

Spiritual Life Hack #51



Try to leave wherever you go a little bit better than when you arrived

In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:16

I have learned a lot from Jesus but also from people like my sister. How cool would it be if more people left breadcrumbs of compassion, goodness, mercy, kindness wherever they ventured? I think that is a great goal! No matter where you go try to leave it a little bit better than when you arrived. My savior and my sister have helped me understand that a bit better.

What are some ways that you can help make this world a better place? Do you allow the light of Jesus to shine in your life? How can you make a difference in the lives of people that are around you?

Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Deuteronomy 15:11

Proverbs 22:9

Matthew 5:15-16

Matthew 25:44-28

Luke 6:38

John 15:12-13

Acts 20:35-38

Romans 12:13

Galatians 6:2

James 1:27

James 2:14-17

1 John 4:19-20

Philippians 2:3-4- Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Quote: In our manner of speech, our plans of living, our dealings with others, our conduct and walk in the church and out of it--all should be done as becomes the gospel

Albert Barnes

Coaching

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 1 Corinthians 12:27

By Jason Young

I had several excellent coaches who invested their time, resources, wisdom, knowledge and their love of sports to the teams that I played on. I believe that playing sports in high school with coaches who cared about me helped me keep focused on graduating and staying out of trouble. I appreciated the discipline, the expectations, the boundaries, and the work ethic that they expected.

I first started thinking about coaching when I was a kid growing up. Although it was imaginary, I developed many teams in my head. I actually wrote down these imaginary teams on paper. Each team had imaginary players and legendary coaches. I was the coach and players for all my teams. I coached and played in epic football contests, grueling baseball series, and legendary buzzer-beating championship basketball games. These contests were all in my head and for fun. Most kids play video games these days I played many games, but they were all in my head. I miss that simplicity of those days.

In 2005-06, I coached of my first basketball team. These were real teenage boys. I could not manipulate the outcome of a game to have it come down to a dramatic buzzer beater. I had to plan practices and devise schemes and strategies.

Thirteen years later, I am still coaching the sport I love the most, basketball. I have had the opportunity to coach over 70 different players. The players make it fun and exciting! Each of them is different and unique. I have coached incredible leaders, super-fast athletes, a national merit scholar, kids that could jump high, kids that could shoot well, and kids that could dribble masterfully. I have also coached many players that were not great athletes, who struggled in school, who were poor leaders and hot-tempered. Regardless, each of these players had a role on the team. Each of them were valuable in one way or another. Each of them brought something of value to the team. Some were star players, and others were role players who rarely made it on the court. Some showed great sacrifices for the benefit of the team.

Spiritual Life Hack #52

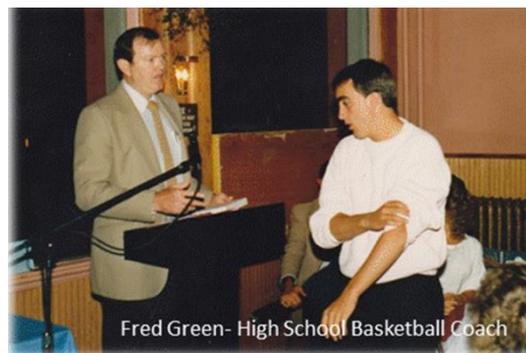


Find your gift and use it to help others.

The same is correct about followers of Christ. Each believer has a spiritual gift, a talent, a personality or life experience that is beneficial to others in this world. God has specially equipped you to serve others!

1 Peter 4:10- Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

What are you passionate about? How are you involved with people? What spiritual gift do you have? Are you using it for the glory of God?



Observe- Pick a passage or two from the selected verses and write down your observations.

Interpret- What are these passages communicating?

Apply- Write down a personal application for your life in light of these passages the questions at the end of the short story and the Spiritual life hack.

Bible passages to consider

Matthew 5:14-16

Matthew 6:1-4

Romans 12:3-8

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

1 Corinthians 12:28

Ephesians 2:10

Ephesians 4:11

Ephesians 4:15-16- Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Quote: Your spiritual gifts were not given for your own benefit but for the benefit of others, just as other people were given gifts for your benefit. *Rick Warren*