

Indiana Jones was asked “What’s the plan”? He said “I dunno, I am making it up as we go.” Life is an unexpected journey. That is the title of the first Hobbit chapter. Bilbo Baggins had a family history of no adventure. When all those dwarfs entered his life, things were about to change. His best laid plans went out the window. He could have never imagined what was in store for his life the day before. Life changes and within that we change too.

Sometimes we need a wake-up call. Maybe it comes in the form of a divorce like what happened to me. Did you get in an accident or did someone close to you die? Life loves baseball. It is always having fun throwing curveballs. So many people play it safe and try and craft their lives. I find they are the unhappy people because things never go as planned.

I planned a trip in the summer of 2003. My boys and I invited a friend to travel with us to America. There was an annual Christian concert festival called Creation Fest in Washington State. We packed up the little Neon and headed out on the road. What a great trip to begin with. We camped and swam at night with bats and dragon flies. It was the best trip so far. A day later we ended up at a motel unexpectantly and it had an indoor pool. Wow, life was so good.

The next morning we ate breakfast and packed up the little Neon. About a mile down the road we crossed a bridge to get onto the highway. It was at that very moment life threw a pretty good curveball. I did not see the oncoming car. The poor girl hit our back end and that was literally the end of the little red Neon. Lucky for us we were only marginally hurt. I was humbled and humiliated all at the same time. The Ex-wife and her boyfriend had to travel to the States to pick us up. Trust me it doesn’t get any worse than that.

The lesson I learned is that God saves. My little Neon was obliterated but we walked away. I was on a Godly trip but we ended up racing down the American highway in an ambulance. The bright side is we were still doing things we had never done before. Driving

down the highway at break neck speeds in an ambulance would be cool as long as you are driving. The trip itinerary didn't include the visit to the medical clinic. It was hard to see that God saves but we were alive and going on a different adventure than we had planned.

We (obviously) never made it to the concerts. I was single and my car was gone. My Dad gave me a despicable Tempo to tide me over. I was even more humiliated. Swimming with bats and dragonflies was so much fun. What went wrong? Life went wrong just as at times it goes right. I'm 34, single, poor, living in a trailer, and driving the worst car possible. Was life over? It was hard in that moment to see the bright side. I hate the cup half full thing. People that say that all the time suck. Still, the bright side is always there even if you can't see it. I suppose that's the cup half full thing. Gee have I become one of those people?

My beautifully ugly Tempo lost its muffler outside my Ex's house and I had to pick it up, throw it in the back, and drive away like a Sherman tank. I was done. Let me tell you a secret. I had asked God to humble me months earlier. I was told that humble people are the best people. I was so stupid to ask God to humble me, because He answered my request. I was humiliated, humbled, and losing my faith all at the same time.

What I did not know was that one month later I would meet my new wife. How could I know? How could any of us know what life will throw at you. I write this to explain that maybe we have been looking at life all wrong. The cup half full guy says wait a day and God will pull through. Sure buddy, as we lay on the road waiting for an ambulance. Despair comes easy if you let it. It took me a while to remember that my car was resting against a stop sign after the accident. If that sign would not have been there we would have rolled. I was so focused on me and my hurt kids. It's hard to look past oncoming curveballs.

Literally a journey in life has its ups and downs. There are long roads, twists, and turns. There is sunshine and rain. I remember taking a trip to Mt Rushmore with my kid. We encountered blistering 50 degree heat and torrential rain. The road was covered in soot from a coal mine and the miles seemed to get longer. Our journey went from home to Rushmore and back, yet in-between was the adventure. We spend so much time wanting to get to that vision in our heads without realizing life is passing us by like traveling on a road.

I don't want to be the cup half full guy for you but then again I have to. I am here to inspire you to be more than you thought possible. On the trip to Rushmore we stopped at an unexpected place: Custer's Last Stand. I did not know it was there but it might have been the best stop we made. We stayed there for hours. Not everything is great or planned, but life can be fun if we let it.

To make a great life is to change the perspective. Don't some people just have a great life and outlook? Sure some people do but not many. That's why there is a not many of them but a ton of us. They are famous because they express who they are outwardly. Most of us keep it inside or don't really know who the heck we are. Sigmund Freud might not really know who he was, yet he spent a lifetime trying to figure it out through other people. He studied people to know himself better. I have been doing the same thing. That changed my perspective.

Our own look on life can change if we want it too. Everyone has an identity crisis at one time or another. For some it's early and for others like me it comes later. The thing is that we need to have that discussion at some point. My adventure to Rushmore had purpose but things changed along the way. Your life needs direction with flexibility along the way. Most of us were like me at 33. I just existed. Life happened and I reacted. That is not living a life. What happens if you're a football running back trying to get across the goal line and someone keeps hitting

you? You change your game plan. The plan is to get the touchdown but the route to get there might change. We need that too: a game plan.

I know someone who planned to retire at 55. She had a great life helping others and working hard. I asked her if she needed God and she politely declined. You know that was just fine (sort of) because we still were good friends. In that moment we were doing life together as friends and co-workers. Two weeks later they buried her because of a double aneurism. Who knew? Pardon the pun but her best laid plans were laid to rest in a grave. Did she do something wrong? No, I just wanted to point out that life will do what it wants and we are along for the ride.

My question is: Was it worth it for my friend to plan retirement when she was just going to die anyways? I say yes for this reason: we need hope and faith that life is worth living. My kid asked if we could do the impossible and see the Pyramids in Egypt. That seemed so crazy at the time, yet we did stand there in Egypt touching them some years later. We dreamed big and did big things. We thought more about life than what was there in the beginning. That's the same with God. It's worth it to give him a chance. God plans big when it comes to us.

God might take you home tomorrow. Maybe it's 50 years from now. What's cool about God is the middle stuff. He wants us to be more than we see and think. This world is extremely big. There are billions of people and hundreds of countries and cultures different than our own. If God made it all and if God likes to share himself, doesn't it make sense he wants us to experience all he has made? It's critical we experience as much as we can on the journey. Sitting on the cliff in my first chapter I had not done that very much. I was just reacting to the hits instead of changing the route to the goal. Dang it that's the cup half full thing again.

This brings me back to the journey. I talked about mine on and off for 10 chapters. What has been and will be your journey? Do you want one? Are you in one? Is it fun or terrible so far?

Do you want a good one or a terrible one (pessimist). The problem is that no matter what you decide, a journey is what you are on. It's how you approach it that counts. Let me quickly give you two examples.

In their Bio Taylor Swift and Stephan King have something in common: really Patrick? They both recognized something within themselves that mattered. Most of us don't care to look under our hood: they did. Stephan King realized he could write (far better than me). His early days were spent writing and selling himself. Every time he was turned down he wrote more and tried harder. His goal was to write and although it took extra time to get there he never quit.

Taylor Swift could sing and she could play guitar. She believed in her ability. She could see herself on stage being an artist. She went to Nashville to sell herself. They turned her down. She went home and played till her fingers bled. In those moments she realized her music was inside her life. Although it took extra time she is famous today because she never quit the dream.

Both of their journeys took time but the dream never wavered. They have grown and changed in the process but they are what they saw years ago. I said earlier in Chapter 3 we have a voice inside that gives us direction about who we are. Mr. King and Ms. Swift listened to it and look what happened. Can I become president if I put my mind to it? No, it's not me. That's not what the voice is saying. God's voice inside me told me to write, express myself, and live life to the fullest. The goal for me is to inspire a great life. Should you be like me? No, my goal is mine and yours is yours. I'm here to inspire just as God has inspired me. As a matter of fact God wants to inspire you better than I can.

Let's create a journey for you or change the path your currently on. I believe the reason your reading this is because something needs to change. Just to be clear it's not a wife or a job necessarily that needs to change. The change comes in perspective (cup half full again). To

create a change is just like the football game. We stay on the same team but the game plan changes for every opponent and even every play. The goal to get across the line remains the same in each game. A good coach creates a plan to accomplish the goal. Along the way are injuries, fumbles, and weather. Change and the goal work together to win regardless of the obstacles we face.

Changing teams is not the answer most of the time. A different team still plays football. They still have the same goals: get across the line and win the game. I know many players that thought they were better than the Canadian Football League. The NFL was their goal. I get it; it's the American kids dream. However, many come back to the CFL dejected if they got cut from the NFL. Those players are rarely ever the same as before they left. They pursued themselves over the game. Is it better to chase the goal or let life bring the goal to you?

Chuck Swindol told the story once about trying to get into ministry by going from church to church and pastor to pastor for approval. What he realized is that when he got fed up with being told no he did it on his own. The cool part is that churches and pastors saw his success and wanted in. Chuck says in his experience "just do it" and someone will notice far greater than trying to sell your idea. It's time to do life instead of looking for it in other people and things.

I desire to do life too. I wanted life to mean something. I read a book called "Don't Sweat the Small Stuff" by Richard Carlson. He pointed out that the small things that bug us are also killing us. Big worries are really far and few between. Bills don't really come every day. Deaths and tragedy don't happen all the time. What does happen is the small stuff. There are line-ups, people cutting you off, and screaming kids to name a few. Why are we so bugged by the things we can't control like the small things that in reality don't affect us directly? I need to live life rather than react all the time.

I needed each day to mean something, so I made a change in how I viewed life. I was tired of being hit. I thought “why not” I’ll hit back. Maybe life is supposed to be lived each and every moment? Boy that sounds new and novel. Ok, it’s not new but to me it was at that time. I decided that life should be like the video games I play. I don’t mean Call of Duty (you only die once in this life). I call this the Paperboy game.

I seem to call things in my life something other than it is: like the Paper towel affect or the Gopher affect (see the Feminine chapter 6). I view life through themes to mentally lessen the burden. Who really wants bill day or marital fight day? In kids shows like Sesame Street they have theme days like apple day or number 7 day. I loved that as a kid. Oh, as a kid, maybe there lies the key? Maybe it’s time to have fun like kids. Being a (why so serious) adult is never fun. It was time to live within Sesame Street and a video game because they are created to be fun. Shouldn’t life be fun? Let’s look at how I do it.

At work, I break up my day into sections to get through 8 hours. Have you ever looked at the clock to see if work is over and yet there is still 4 hours to go? We all have so I changed the game. My day is broken up into themes that reflect the task. For the postman I get up, have coffee, and drive to work listening to sports radio. I then get to work and sort my mail. After that there are the pick-up parts and three delivery sections. I call them themes to accomplish each one each day. There really is no time factor involved because it has to be done. Have fun doing each theme.

I am doing the same formula in life. Each week I map out the week. What needs to be accomplished? Where are the holes for down time with my wife and myself? Each day reflects the bigger goal. So I work, finish writing a chapter (maybe), and take in a movie. The week is done as I finished the work. It seems boring but this is the point. In looking at the week I see my

life to be lived. Jesus says worry about today because tomorrow has enough worry of its own. I live to accomplish today. Sure things change but let's accomplish today.

Ok, now let's look at the big picture. I wanted to go to Egypt in 5 years. This is the most important part of the journey: it's called dreaming and hopes. I saw pictures of the Pyramids. I want to touch them. I live in Canada so I can't. What are the road blocks to getting there? It can be money, danger, time, and a host of other things. For five years each and every paycheck I worked to knock off one of the road blocks. It's like football. What is in my way? How can I get around the defence to score?

So my goal is living life to the fullest. I live each day enjoying each part individually. Every month I have lived. I also have planned and executed routes to fulfill my Goal. Like going to Egypt, writing a book, and inspiring others. What I want you to see is that time does not matter. Fulfilling the goal does. You can't affect time but you can always affect how you live within it. Some years ago I wrote a thought about time. On our birth date we land on the road of time and begin our life. Before and after us, time will continue on like a road. How did you drive on that road is all you have. You can't affect time. The road has always been there and will always be there.

Maybe compartmentalizing our day is anal or OCD? It might be but look at it this way: Do you want to say "Where did the time go" or "Man that was a ride this year"? It is the cup half full thing isn't it. To slow down and make your life worth living is so cool. I was sitting on the cliff listening to my ex-wife say that life with me sucked. In reality, she was saying life sucked. Remember I worked and I lived, but I did not dream big with lofty goals. We need to live a life well.

I did say that those who plan their lives will crash. They cannot handle change to the plan. That is not what I'm saying. Again it comes back to the video game paperboy. In this game you have a goal to deliver the papers to the correct spots. Along the path are on-coming tires, cats, dogs, and people. The goal never changes but the path does. I planned to go to Egypt but car bills, health, and time got in the way. My kid and I found a way through and we did it. I still enjoyed every day until I got there. The problem some planners have is creating life by their rules (have fun with that one). It's time to change your thinking that life "is" fun rather than life can be fun or I'll make it fun.

I enjoy the game just as I enjoy each piece of every day. If we create goals then we create hope and fun in the future. In my mind it's just as much fun playing the life game like Paperboy. You can hit me, change the defence or anything you want but I'm going to live life to the fullest. Hawaii and Egypt were fun but each day at work can be fun too. It's all in how we play the game. Great sports stars thrive for the win or the kill. What they really think is in each game they have fun competing. The win is nice but they all say the thrill of competing and creatively finding a way is more fun. Life too can be fun if we let ourselves enjoy the journey.

So let's wrap this up by trying this at home as opposed to the disclaimer (don't try this at home). I decided in my split-up to not make the same mistake twice. I looked at each day as an adventure. There is the same amount of Mondays as there are Saturdays. Did you know that? We will die on a certain day of the week. Will you miss another Saturday if you die on Tuesday? Pessimistic yes but reality might be setting in right now. Live well on Monday thru Sunday.

I plan life so that I am excited for my future. I plan my day and week so that I am excited about each day and each week. I will preach before a trip and work after Hawaii. I will get sick before and after too. Is life only fun on Saturday or in Egypt? If it is I'm sure life for you deep

down inside sucks. There is a lot of depressing space in between the fun stuff you know unless everything is fun.

Driving down the road in an ambulance is not what I considered fun. However, on that day many years ago I had to make it fun or we would have panicked. When my ex arrived to save us she commented that we were rather chipper and that surprised her. You see I changed my thoughts. I told the kids that this was new and we may never do it again (speeding in an ambulance in America). I told them that God had bigger plans than what we see. I met my new wife a month later. In the moment I only saw pain and destruction but I hoped for more and lived for more.

The journey on this road called life is all we really have. We love, we learn, and we live. Eventually we die (pessimistic again). The beauty about being a Christian is the extended journey. God's promises two things if we believe. One is to be with us along our journey. The other is to extend it forever. Let's say you don't want to believe in that. Ok fair enough but what then is the end goal: we eat and drink because tomorrow we die? I hope for eternity rather than 6 feet under. I'm living today as if it will go on forever. In the Bible there is a thought that we hope for a return to Eden, the promise land, or heaven. Down here we live our lives so that we will be in heaven one day. Jesus again repeats "to think more about today than heaven." There is so much to do even in this lifetime.

Let's take God out of it and replace him with Yoda from Star Wars. Yoda said to Obi-wan about Luke Skywalker **"This one a long time have I watched. All his life has he looked away...to the future, to the horizon. Never his mind on where he was. Hmm? What he was doing. Hmph. Adventure. Heh. Excitement. Heh. A Jedi craves not these things. You are reckless."**

I say reckless is good. But... Reckless to me is just like what Yoda said: planning, crafting, and orchestrating your life is reckless. Where is the fun in controlling it all? The spice in living is playing the game called life. Life will never let you control it so why are you trying too. What Yoda meant is that a Jedi has discipline in the moment. They are able to take on what comes. Peaks and valleys are in the journey. A Jedi or a Christian should not put values in peaks and valleys. They are all on the journey.

I don't value time because time is my journey I'm on. How much time do you have? We all have more or less than others. The time we have been given is actually yours to do with if you want to. So dream and hope bigtime. Experience the little things along the way and my goodness enjoy them like I did at Custer's Last Stand on the road to Mt Rushmore. In a way I'm saying name and claim moments in each day, week month, and year. Make life fun so that your journey is fun. Plan ahead knowing the pathway there will not be what you expected but what you hoped for once you get where you are going.