The Average Joe

It’s Monday.

The beginning of another week of...normalcy. Life as an average Joe is once again about to start its familiar grind.

If you are like me, we go through the same—often life-numbing—motions every day. We crawl out of bed at 0-dark-thirty to the sound of a screaming alarm clock, then stub our toe on our kid’s “perfect” Christmas gift—the very one that last year cost us two days’ pay! The dog needs to go outside. The kids are asleep but will definitely need some “dad time” later. The washer that sprang a leak still needs repair. The milk in the fridge is sour. The next-door neighbor parked his extra car in front of our driveway—again.

Oh, man, this is not the life you and I probably thought we would live!
As a boy I certainly had bigger plans than working in a cramped cubicle from eight to five, building widgets on the late shift at the local mill, or flipping burgers at the corner diner. My boyhood dreams never included a mortgage, diapers, traffic tickets, or cleaning out the gutters. Perhaps, like me, you dreamed of saving a life, flying a fighter jet, finding a cure for cancer, or even walking on the moon.

As boys, we had such high hopes to accomplish something great, to make a difference, to live a life that left a mark on those around us. We marveled at men like Chuck Yeager, Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, and the Reverend Billy Graham. We wanted to ride like John Wayne, lead like Ronald Reagan, drive like Mario Andretti, and win like the 1973 Miami Dolphins. All of us longed to be James Bond; instead we ended up looking and acting a bit like Archie Bunker.

Maybe you are asking the same question I ask: What happened to my life?

What happened for most of us is reality. Instead of finding fame and fortune, normalcy and “never enough” found us. We are average Joes, but is that really a problem? Definitely not! So-called average Joes are the ones who make the world work.

God seems to have a special fondness for average Joes. Before they accomplished extraordinary deeds, normal guys like Gideon, David, Peter, and Paul went about their farming, sheep herding, fishing, and tent making. Even Jesus, our Redeemer, Healer, and coming King, started out using a hammer and saw in a carpenter’s shop.

You’ll find average Joes are everywhere. Good men, honest men. They are hard working, genuine, and steadfast. More often than not, they are absent from the great halls of debate, the ivory towers of scholastic achievement, or the family trees of aristocracy. Instead they mow grass, sell insurance, build furniture, drive trucks, manage restaurants, and fix plumbing. They can be found serving coffee at the local diner, selling tires, or pastoring a small church. In our hurried pace we often pass them by as we rush off to our next appointment or event.
I suppose we might find an average Joe on Wall Street or in a government building in Washington DC, but if we did, he might be there only to fix, paint, or build something. Sometimes looked down upon, even dismissed as “less than,” average Joes are the stable, dependable, resolute backbone of an ever-so-wavering society.

In a day when compromise and political correctness rule, these simple men—average Joes—seek truth and have an unshakable commitment to doing what is right. Ask them their opinion, and you will get an earful of resolute beliefs in God, country, and family. Strong in character, integrity, and principle, these are the unsung heroes of everyday life in America.

**Average Joes Make a Difference**

Being an average Joe is awesome, and I’m proud to call myself one. Too often, though, we average Joes feel ashamed of who we are. For some reason we don’t seem to quite measure up. Why is that? What lies are we hearing and believing about our place in the world?

Many in contemporary society want to tell us our average Joe life is irrelevant, maybe even inconsequential. *What? Are you kidding me?* Tell that to the son who thinks his dad is the greatest. Tell that to the wife who has such deep respect and love for a husband who, day in and day out, goes to work at an unglamorous, demanding job to ensure his family is fed and sheltered. In fact, tell that to a savior named Jesus who chose twelve average Joes to help Him change the world.

Who cares if a man ever rafts the Colorado River, plays college football, or makes a million dollars before he’s forty? That guy may never leave that cubicle he calls home forty-plus hours a week. He may always drive a minivan, sell appliances, and live in a suburban tract house. Is he any less a man?

No way.
Labeled “average,” this Joe is that steadfast example of simple faith, honor, integrity, and character. He is the man who goes home at night to his wife and children. He mows the lawn, fixes the deck, reads to his kids, loves his wife, helps his friends, and serves his Lord. He’s the kind of neighbor who will lend you his tools and watch your house when you’re out of town. You trust him with your kids. He pays his bills and taxes. If he says he will be somewhere, he will be there—and on time. He’s got his problems, and he owns them. Quite simply, average Joe is the very best of who we are.

This book is a challenge to look deep within yourself, to better understand the man God has made you to be, to find contentment in the life God has blessed you with. I will urge you to finally let go of boyish or unrealistic dreams and replace them with the wise passions, wisdom, and discipline of a man. It’s time to make sure that integrity, honor, and moral steadfastness describe who you are.

Later in this book I will share some stories of average Joes that none of us will ever see on the front page or hear about on a cable news show. But in the world that really matters—God’s kingdom—they are heroes of the faith, true examples of how God uses ordinary men to change the world.

Before we go on, I want to make something really clear: when I use the word average, I don’t mean lazy, sloppy, inept, mediocre, or anything like that. A true average Joe works hard, give his all, makes a difference. And he does it without whining or feeling sorry for himself. An average Joe isn’t expecting to get rich or famous. He’s content knowing that the One whose opinion really counts is pleased with him.

While the world around us implies that we are nothing without fame, fortune, and recognition, we daily and without fanfare answer the call to perform the routine. As average Joes, we make a difference. The life we are living does have purpose, meaning, and honor.