

# Bouncing Back When Your Chances Are Zero!



by Joshua Goodling

*Bouncing Back  
When Your Chances  
Are Zero!*

**The Inspirational Life Story of  
Joshua Goodling**

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## Introduction

What are the chances you will succeed? What are the chances you will overcome the obstacle you are facing right now in your life? What are the real numbers? The chance your marriage will last, you will get the promotion you so desire, your kids will turn out right, you will find true love and a meaningful life? What are the chances? Decisions are made every day based on numbers...statistics. Sometimes we let those numbers tell us whether to keep trying, whether to continue or drop out, whether to even get up in the morning or stay in bed. If you lose “hope” you are in for a deep, dark journey. My friend Joshua's number was zero. It doesn't get any lower than zero! Not a fifty-fifty chance he would make it, not a twenty-five percent chance, not even ten percent. Zero! Think about that.

Joshua Goodling has been my friend for almost thirty years. We met on a college campus while we were both preparing for ministry. I love this guy. He was walking around in his small frame with joy, determination and an amazing passion to pursue a vibrant life for God. More than once we have had dinner in a restaurant and he was, for the hundredth time, handed a kids menu! He laughs it off and goes on to order a man sized steak! I saw him graduate college, strive to do ministry work as an evangelist but once again, obstacles raised their head and cast a dark shadow over him. Pastors were afraid to use him as a speaker. He was small, his vocal chords were paralyzed and his voice was hard to understand at first. He never gave up. Eventually he had to do something to get on his feet and he took a temporary job in an office. He taught himself how to build a web page for the small office where he was working. He mastered web development and eventually was hired by WebMD in Atlanta. After 7 years there, he was hired by PGI as a web development director. God had a plan and through various connections I have watched Joshua rise out of the ashes of adversity to speak to groups of fifteen and groups of five thousand, followed by endless standing ovations.

This book will inspire you. Walk with Joshua as a four year old boy just diagnosed with cancer. Listen with him as the doctors say the chance of survival is zero and he has one week to live. Lie with him on the operating table as a little boy, not understanding what the doctors are doing to him. Stand beside him and watch as God heals him, ignites a passion in his heart to live out his mission. Listen to him talk about the possibilities and notice how he ignores the “limitations” because God is real and He can do above all we could ask or think.

Joshua's message isn't one that preaches positive thinking or success. He knows God healed him but he also knows others didn't survive cancer. He knows that God has unique plans for each person and whether that plan is to live four years or one hundred and four years, Joshua's message is to ignite in others a love for God, and an understanding of God's love for us and a passion to live life to the fullest as God intended.

I know you will be impacted by his story.

*I Corinthians 1:25-29, "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence."*

Ken Turner

High Impact Teens

Dayton, Tennessee

Hearing the words; "Your child has cancer" can be a life-shattering experience. And even more so when added to those words is: "He only has one week to live, and he won't make it!" In November of 1970, my parents heard those words. At the age of four, I was much too young to remember many of the initial experiences with cancer, but I do remember and daily deal with the struggles in life as a result of having been through such a terrible life changing experience.

One's reactions to major problems and difficulties that come in life have a lot to do with how the remainder of their life plays out. Long ago God showed me that one of the main reasons He allowed me to go through such a traumatic experience was so that He could use my life as a testimony of His greatness and glory, and so that He could use me to bring hope and encouragement to others who have and will experience cancer's grip or that of some other disease or life-changing trauma in their life.

At approximately 11:00 a.m. on February 4, 1966, I was born the second of seven children in my rather small family. I guess my parents read the book, *Cheaper by the Dozen* too many times or something.

I was raised in a Christian home, and we always had a time of family devotions each evening, where we would read the Bible, sing songs, and recite memory verses and things. I can still remember many of those occasions and my father telling his rather animated Bible stories, and we would all sit there on the edge of our seat, wide-eyed hanging on every word as he told us about David, Jonah, Joseph and others.

One evening after our family gathering, I talked to my dad about my own need of salvation, and wanting to know Jesus Christ. We prayed together, and thus began my personal relationship with the best Friend one could ever hope for or personally know.

I realize many people think children at such a young age are too innocent to fully understand things of a nature such as salvation, but the Bible tells us that even a child can understand it. The problem comes when we try to make a personal relationship with Jesus Christ more difficult than it really is. The Bible says; "...*if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*" (Romans 10:9). Pretty simple really, it's just a matter of realizing one's need for a Savior and trusting in Jesus Christ, who died for us.

Beginning a personal relationship with Jesus was just the first of the life-changing events that would happen to me at the age of four. The second event, although maybe not as important in light of eternity, was a much more involved and painful experience, which I hope to tell in the remaining pages of this book.

## **A Life Changing Event**

The second event in my life began when my mother noticed that the area under my jaw had a noticeable swelling. My parents took me to visit a doctor, who closely examined the swelling, but could not determine what was causing it. He began to check through several medical journals and reference books.

At first they thought it was a peritonsillar abscess that was causing the swelling. They thought it would be a simple process of draining the abscess, and I would be on my way home the next day.

However, when they were operating, they found no abscess, but noticed that my lymph nodes looked bad, so they removed them for testing. However, the swelling remained.

They also notice during the operation that my tonsils were so swollen that they almost touched each other, so they performed a second operation to remove my tonsils. Again, the swelling didn't go away.

The swelling continued to grow, and had quickly grown around the side of my neck.

About this time, my mother noticed that I could no longer keep control of my eyes. My eyeballs would just roll around, and I couldn't keep them both focused in the same direction.

She pointed this out to the doctors, and they began to realize that this wasn't just some abscess or temporary swelling – it was far more serious.

They finally decided to do a third operation and perform a biopsy of the swelling, and I was soon wheeled into the operating room for the third time in a matter of weeks.

The trauma of having three major operations in such a short time was quite stressful to a four year old boy. That alone would be difficult for an adult! The doctors were very leery of performing this third operation. They had decided to do a biopsy of the swelling. In order to do this, they would have to cut through the side of my neck. If they accidentally damaged a nerve, close to the area of the swelling, they would permanently paralyze half of my head.

Following this third operation I spent a long time in the recovery room, having a very difficult time, and was having trouble breathing. The hospital didn't usually allow parents of patients into the recovery rooms, but since I was having a lot of trouble, they thought if my mother was there talking to me, it might help me recover, so they asked her to come into the room with me. My mother said I didn't look like I would make it.

They sent the biopsy off to another hospital to be tested, and the diagnosis came back a couple of days later. It wasn't good.

My mother was in the hospital room where I was sleeping. Around midnight, the doctor came by and motioned her out into the hall, where he told her the results of the biopsy. They had finally diagnosed the swelling as a malignant tumor called, "Rhabdomyosarcoma", a deadly type of cancer. It was especially deadly back in the early 70's before they had developed a lot of the modern cancer fighting drugs and treatments available today.

My mother called my father to tell him the news, but when he answered the telephone, all she was able to say was; "Come here." I can't imagine what they must have gone through during this time. Since I was only four at the time, I don't remember much of the actual events – only what my parents and others have told me about those difficult times. I have a few moments that especially stand out in my mind, but not the entire ordeal.

The next morning, my parents met in the doctor's office. The cancer specialist described how serious the cancer was. He told my parents that I had only **one week to live**.

He had looked through his record books, and every previous case he could find had been terminal. He admitted that there could always be an exception, but in my case it was highly doubtful.

My doctor decided that they would try radiation therapy to attack the tumor, although he didn't think it would work.

My parents were to take me out of the hospital each morning and transport me to another hospital, where I was to receive my radiation treatments. However, I almost didn't live to receive that first radiation treatment.

On the night before my first treatment, I was asleep in my hospital bed. My mother was half asleep in the chair beside me. Because of the swollen tumor in my throat, my breathing made a loud hoarse sound which could be heard across the room. All of the sudden, in the middle of the night, I stopped breathing. My mother knew immediately what had happened. She went running down the hallway looking for help. One doctor and two nurses responded to her calls and came running.

Obviously they were able to get me started breathing again. They said I looked really bad, as though I were already dead. I guess that was one of the closest moments to death I was to encounter during this fight with cancer.

The following day, before I left to go to my radiation treatment, my mother's cousin and aunt came by my hospital room to visit me. They said that judging from the way I looked, they doubted if I would live an entire week, or even make it through another night.

My parents took me to other hospital to receive my first radiation treatment. The Radiologist had more discouraging news. He told my parents that usually when they used radiation on a tumor like mine, it caused the tumor to grow faster, and as far as he was concerned, my chances were zero.

I was led into a room with a large metal table in the middle of the room. I can still picture that room.

They laid me on the table under a large monstrous looking machine, and everyone left the room. No one was allowed in the room as I received the treatment. I do actually remember lying on that table too. It might not have actually been as LARGE as I remember it being, because I was only four – so almost any medical equipment or tables would have looked large to me.

Every day for thirty days I came to receive the radiation treatments. However, instead of the tumor spreading and killing me, it disappeared. So, around the time



when everyone thought I would be dead, the cancer was gone. And after spending almost two months in the hospital on the verge of death, I was going home. But it wasn't over yet.

## **Round Two**

Later, that same year, my family and I took a vacation to visit relatives. One night during our visit, I awoke with a terrible headache. Later, when my mother was cutting my hair, she noticed a slightly swollen area in the back of my head. Her first thought was to remember the other swelling she had found several months previously and we immediately returned home, and back to the hospital. The tumor had returned, this time in the back of my head around the main nerve. Because of the new location of the tumor, operating was impossible without killing me, or at least causing some serious damage.

I continued to have serious headaches, and they got worse. Soon I just had a constant 24-hour a day headache. The pain was tremendous, and I had to be always kept under sedation. All I did was lie in bed either heavily sedated in a little pain, or else half-sedated in intense pain. I could hardly move at all. When my parents came to give me medicine, they had to hold my head up, because I was so weak.

The doctors said I couldn't receive any more radiation treatments, so they began to use Chemotherapy. Because of this I experienced the side effects one does and all my hair fell out. The treatments upset my stomach so much that I couldn't keep any food down. I lost so much weight my bones could be seen pushing against my skin. I began to look like the pictures you see of starving children in third world countries.

Around March of that year, one of the doctors ran a blood test and made the discovery that my red blood cells were not developing properly, the cancer was taking its toll. He wrote in his report; "Joshua is sinking fast." He told my parents that I would never make it. He couldn't believe I was still alive then.

About this time, the doctors started using a different type of chemotherapy that had been developed by the Ohio State University Medical School. I received an intravenous injection once a week every five weeks, and five days a week on the sixth week. I became so accustomed to having a needle stuck in my arm I would just sit and watch. Because of the many injections I received, my veins began to shrink. Sometimes they would have to stick me five or six times before they would find a

vein that wouldn't collapse on them. I began to feel like a human pin cushion.

One time a doctor was giving me an injection, and the needle slipped. The medication went under my skin and caused a bad burn. I still have a few scars today as a result of those many injection attempts.

One afternoon, the doctor called my mother and asked her to bring me to the hospital. There was a cancer specialist from New York City visiting, and he wanted to see me. After his examination, he said; "This is a terminal case, Joshua will never make it."

However, almost two years from the time the first deadly tumor appeared, the cancer was gone. The doctors said they still considered it a terminal case, and that it would eventually be terminal. That was over 40 years ago and there has been no sign of the cancer since!

## **What Cancer Left Behind**

Even though the cancer was gone, it left behind several scars that would remain with me for life. Humanly speaking, my life was drastically changed. Some would even go so far as to say my life was "ruined".

From the time the cancer disappeared until I was eight years old, I did not grow more than one or two inches. After checking with a doctor about this, we found that radiation had killed most of my growth hormone. They said I would most likely not grow much more. Since then I have grown to almost five feet. I am still short, but at least I am not as short as I was when they said I wouldn't grow any more.

At times, this has been somewhat of a problem for me. People are constantly thinking I am much younger than my age. While hundreds of people wish they could look younger, I often have wished I could look older. I recall one time I was sitting in a restaurant with my sister, who is younger than me. When the waitress came to take our orders, she asked my sister what I would be having, thinking she was my mother.

Then, there was the time I was out grocery shopping with my brother who is a year younger than I am. I was pushing the grocery cart, and an elderly lady passed us, smiled at my brother and said: "You're taking your son grocery shopping!" Of

course, rather than let her know I was actually older than him, he smiled and replied; “Yes – I do that when he’s good!”

When I went to take my driver's test, I had quite a time trying to convince the driving instructor that I was actually 17 years old. I remember when I showed up at the driver’s testing center. I walked up to the counter and told the person that I was here to take my driver’s test. The person looked at me and said; “Son, you have to be 17 to get a driver’s license. Come back in a few years.” I then showed her my birth certificate and explained about my situation with having had cancer, etc. I finally convinced her I was old enough, and I guess the fact that I made over 90% on my written test helped to confirm in her mind that I was indeed 17.

My family owned a 1979 Chevy Impala at the time. The thing was as big as a house boat almost. So I was a little nervous when the driving instructor told me to pull up and parallel park between the two orange traffic cones. I pulled the boat forward and put it in reverse to begin backing it into the position. The driving instructor looked at her watch and saw that it was almost quitting time. She waved her hand and said, “Just drive it around the parking lot.” So, I drove the boat around the parking lot at the testing center and passed my driving test.

Now that I’m older, I at least look old enough to drive. However, when I first started driving, people thought I was just a kid. I enjoy seeing the expressions on some people's faces. It’s still not unusual for me to be stopped at a red light and glance over to see the people in the car next to me staring and pointing...but I’m so used to it now, I just ignore it.

I worked one summer at a gas station in Georgia. One day as I was pulling a car into the garage to be serviced, an elderly lady who was buying gas yelled out; "Somebody stop him. That kid's trying to drive that car." I’ve even been pulled over by the police on more than one occasion because they didn’t think I was old enough to be driving.

Another effect from the cancer that has really been a problem for me is the radiation I received destroyed all of the roots in my teeth. Because of this, my teeth have slowly fallen apart. I have spent hundreds of hours in dental chairs, and often with an entire group of dental students looking inside my mouth going; “Oooh”, “hmmm.....very interesting”, etc. I recall once being up on the stage in an auditorium filled with dental students and having them all lined up after the presentation to get a look in my mouth to see all of the damage from the radiation treatments.

Talk about a fun time! I've even been written about in some dental journals.

The radiation also messed up the nerves in my mouth, so Novocain doesn't work too well in numbing my jaw. I remember one dentist gave me a couple shots of medication, and began drilling away thinking the stuff would work just like it did on everyone else. As soon as the drill broke through the tooth surface, I almost tore the dental chair apart from the pain. Finally he had to put me to sleep. Another dentist was trying to remove some excess gum tissue with a small torch. He also gave me medication, which again didn't work too well. That time I almost tore the entire building apart, the pain was so great.

By 1989, my teeth had totally rotted away, and I had to have what was left completely removed and have dentures made. They had to put me to sleep to do this, and because of the damage done to my mouth by radiation, I had to have Hyperbaric Oxygen treatments for 10 days before surgery and 10 days after to be sure my gums would heal up. For this treatment, I was placed on a stretcher and slid into a glass tube, looking somewhat like a torpedo chamber on a submarine. Both ends of the tube were sealed off, and the oxygen in the tube was raised to three times the normal atmospheric oxygen pressure.

It was difficult to breath, and not really much fun. I was just waiting for someone to accidentally push a FIRE button and send me sailing through the hospital wall. I had to stay in there for one and a half hour periods, twice a day for those twenty days. This was supposed to help my mouth heal properly after the surgery to remove my teeth. Although I'm not entirely certain it was necessary.

Probably one of the greatest problems I have had as a result of the cancer and its treatments is the partial paralyzing of my vocal chords and cleft palate. As a result of this it is difficult for me to speak, and difficult for me to be understood at times. This has been a great problem, especially when talking over the phone, or when talking to someone for the first time, like trying to order in a restaurant. I many times have to repeat myself before people can understand what I am trying to say. My voice sounds perfectly normal to me, but that's just because I know what I'm saying, or at least I think I do sometimes.

I can remember having great trouble with this in elementary school. When I was in the first grade, my teacher would take me out in the hallway away from the other students when it came time to recite something from memory, because all the other kids would laugh when I talked. Looking back on this, she probably should have

just made me speak in class – that would have helped to eliminate some future problems with shyness and speaking to others.

And there are still more problems which are too difficult to describe. It is certainly not easy to experience such a life changing trauma as terminal cancer. The first inclination is to crawl into a hole somewhere and never accomplish anything with your life. There have been many times when I have felt like doing just that. At least people wouldn't laugh and make fun of me or think I was just a young kid, and I wouldn't have such a difficult time finding a date! However, I knew God had kept me alive for some purpose. There must be something He had planned for my life.

## **God's Plan**

When I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior at the age of four, I gave my life to Him. So, my life was no longer mine to do with what I wanted. I know some people have asked me if I was mad at God for destroying my life with cancer? But, actually – He wasn't "destroying" my life, He was "creating" my life. You see once I gave my life to Him, He could then take over and do whatever He wanted. And it's not like He just said; "Ha! Just wait until you see how I'm going to mess up your life!" No, God had a perfect plan for my life as He does for everyone's life.

Sometimes God's plan includes trials and difficult times to prepare us for what He wants us to accomplish. If I hadn't had cancer, I wouldn't have a "story" to tell, and I would not be traveling and speaking, changing lives, encouraging people, and I wouldn't be writing this book.

When I was in the fifth grade, I felt God calling me to do one of the last things most people would expect me to do, become a preacher and speaker! I wanted to share with people my life experiences, and about my wonderful Savior. When I first expressed this interest to some people, they just laughed and told me there was no way I could do that, I was too short, talked funny, etc. But I knew that if God wanted me to, I could do it. After all, He does promise us "*I can do all things through Christ.*" I have preached many hundreds of times since then, and have spoken in many different places, and many people have shared with me how encouraged and inspired they were by hearing my story, and what God has done in my life.

God has proven to me that He does not want us to focus on our problems. He

wants us to give everything completely and totally to Him. When we finally learn to do that, He has promised to faithfully take care of every need we have, and to always be with us no matter how difficult the journey may seem.

## **My First “Church”**

When I was 10 years old, we lived in Martinsburg, West Virginia. As was often the case with my large family, we didn't have a lot of money then, and were living in the basement of an old church building that belonged to the church we attended. The auditorium of the old church building had been converted to a basketball court and was often used by the church for youth activities, although the platform with the pulpit furniture and stuff remained at the one end.

Knowing God wanted me to preach, I went to the pastor of our church and asked him if I could use the old auditorium on Saturday evenings to hold services. He immediately agreed, and even put an announcement about it in the regular Sunday church bulletin.

Every Saturday morning for the next few months (until we moved out of town), I would go up and down the street around the church and knock on doors and invite people to come hear me preach. Of course, it's not every day you hear a knock at the door and find a short little kid who talks funny inviting you to come hear him preach. So I often had people tell me to go home, or just shut the door. However, on the biggest Saturday night, there were over 75 people who came to hear me preach. I'm sure my messages weren't anything to write home about back then – but I was trying to make a difference in people's lives. Thus began my public speaking.

Over the coming years, I took advantage of every opportunity I could to speak and share my story and message with others, and in the fall of 1984, I headed off to college to study and become a preacher.

While in college, again I actively looked for and took advantage of every opportunity I could find to speak to others. I spoke in almost every college Sunday School class, and in many of the churches in the area.

## **A Tent Meeting**

In 1986, after returning to college after the summer break, a friend of mine and I

began discussing our summer and what we had done, the churches we had spoken in, etc.

My friend started telling me about a large tent revival he had been to over the summer, and kind of on the side suggested to me; “We should have a tent meeting sometime.” He was just making a less than serious comment, but I replied: “Let’s do it!”, and the plans began to take shape.

Of course, there were several obstacles to our sudden plans. We didn’t have a tent, we didn’t have any chairs or seating, we didn’t have any of the items one would need to hold a tent meeting. And we were poor college students...we had no money!

After praying about this, and feeling that God was leading us in this, we set off to find an empty field in which to hold our tent meeting. The college we attended was quite strict about going off campus, and you had to sign out with a note telling what time you were leaving, where you were going, etc. Since we were looking for a field for the tent meeting, we wrote “Field Watching” on the sign out form. I kept expecting someone from the administrative offices to call us in for questioning about that – but no one ever did.

We finally found a large empty lot on the main road through town. The lot was next to a radio station, so we enquired at the station as to who owned the field, and were directed to a printing company down a side road.

My friend and I went down to the printing company and spoke with the owner. We told him that we were interested in using his field to hold a tent meeting. He immediately said: “I let a carnival group use that field a few months ago, and they tore it all up. Sorry, but I don’t think so.” So, we turned to leave and were almost out the door when he called out to us, “Just a moment! Young man (referring to me), are YOU actually going to be preaching at this tent meeting?” I told him that indeed I was, and shared with him a brief summary of my life story. The owner thought for a moment and then said: “Okay, you can use the field for free.” God had opened the first door!

Now we needed a tent – kind of an essential item, if one is going to have a “tent” meeting. We went to a tent rental company in town and inquired about renting a large tent. My friend was doing most of the talking at these places, and asked about renting a tent that would seat 100 people. I immediately jumped in and said;

“No no...we want a tent that will seat at least 300!!” He looked at me in astonishment for a moment, but then said; “Joshua, we’ve never done this before. Don’t you think we should start out small?” But I insisted that if we were going to have a tent meeting, we were going to do it right!

The owner of the tent rental company looked in his catalog and told us that it would cost something like \$500 or some large amount to rent that size tent for a week, I don’t recall the exact figure. Of course, knowing we didn’t have any money and that was a large amount to owe someone, we thanked the guy for his time and turned to leave. The guy asked as we were leaving why we wanted such a large tent? And I told him we were going to have a tent meeting, and I and my friend would be preaching. He looked at me and asked; “YOU’RE going to be preaching?” And again, I told the guy my story, and then he said: “Okay, don’t tell anyone, but I’ll let you have it for \$100 for the week.” And the amazing part is we told him we didn’t have the money yet – could we pay him after the meeting was over? To which he immediately agreed.

The same basic story happened when we went to rent chairs - 300 chairs for an entire week wasn’t cheap, but again the rental company allowed us to rent them and then owe them the money at the end of the meeting.

When I think about it now it is really amazing! Here were some college students without any money and no credit cards, asking a tent rental company and a chair rental company to let them rent very large items, and owe them the money. Obviously God was in this, because they didn’t even seem to blink at our requests to pay them later.

We had an amazing tent meeting, and on the biggest night there were so many people who came to that meeting, that we didn’t have enough seats.

And at the end of the week, we had more than enough money given to us to pay off all the things we owed. God taught me an awesome lesson that week about completely trusting in Him!

## **God Provides a Car**

Two summers before I graduated from college I had a couple of speaking engagements lined up out of town and needed a car. I prayed that God would provide for me.



One of my brothers had a 1979 Plymouth Horizon that had stopped running and was sitting across town in a mechanic's front yard rusting away. He told me I could have it, and he sold it to me for \$1.00.

Well, my father and I went over to the mechanic's house to look at the car. We opened the hood, and there stretched across the entire rusty engine was a giant spider web. The mechanic told us it would take more work than the car was worth to get it running. I told my father to take me down to the local auto parts store and we bought a new battery.

We came back, placed the new battery in the car, and it started right up. I drove that car from Atlanta, Georgia all the way down to Louisiana and back, and then down to South Georgia for a revival meeting in which I was speaking. When the week long revival meeting was over, the pastor handed me an envelope with some money in it, and I got back in the old Horizon and headed back home. About half way back to Atlanta, the car died right in the middle of the express way. Thankfully, I was coming down hill, and God allowed it to happen right at an exit ramp. I coasted down the exit ramp, and into a gas station parking lot.

The town where it broke down was the same town where another friend of mine from college lived. I called him up, and he came and picked me up and drove me to the airport. The money from the church was just enough to pay for my ticket home, and when I got home, my grandmother bought me another car.

That car that wasn't supposed to run, ran just as long as I needed it. When I didn't need it anymore – it stopped running. God is so gracious in supplying our every need.

### **Formula III**

I have always enjoyed writing, and over the years have written many articles, brochures, and even have a self-published book *Finding True Happiness*.

While living in Knoxville, Tennessee in 1989, I decided to start my own Christian newspaper. I gave the newspaper the title *Formula III*, which stood for the formula to true happiness: 1. Jesus first, 2. Others second and 3. Yourself last, which of course spells JOY, and that is the only way to find TRUE Joy in our lives.

I had an electric typewriter, and some clip art books, and would type out the arti-

cles on paper, cut them up and paste them out on some layout sheets along with some clip art and things.

I did all of the article selection, editing and everything myself. Then I found a local newspaper print shop in Knoxville that would print the papers for me.

I would order 5000 copies each month and go pick them up from the printers. Then I would take a small bundle of them to each of the churches in the Knoxville area that would allow me to place them in their foyer for the people who attended the churches to pick up, and a couple of small stores let me put some in their entry way.

I did that for an entire year – 12 issues. I paid all of the printing costs, and distributing them myself. At the end of that year, I moved to Michigan to work at a Christian Camp, and that ended the newspaper.

## **Becoming a Web Developer**

For a few years after I graduated from college, I tried to get meetings traveling as an evangelist and speaking in churches. However, since no one had ever heard of me, and people had a difficult time understanding me over the telephone when I called up churches and schools – I couldn't seem to get very many meetings lined up.

At first I was rather frustrated with God about this. I thought, “Well, you wanted me to share my story with people, and you wanted me to reach people with the Gospel – how am I supposed to do this if I never get any meetings?” Little did I know all that God was planning.

It soon became apparent that I would have to get at least a part-time job or some way to get money to pay my bills and stuff. I worked a few odd jobs at temp agencies and other places, and finally in 1997 landed a job doing some data entry at a software company in Knoxville.

Right about this time, the world wide web was just starting to take off, and I had begun to teach myself how to mess around with building HTML and other web related technologies.

The company that had hired me to do some data entry on a temporary basis, was

soon given the job of building the website for HGTV. They found out that I knew a little (and looking back on it I knew very “little” about it then) of how to work on web pages, and so they offered me a full-time job – and I began to help work on the HGTV website. I learned a lot that I didn’t know about the trade, and even got to help build the website for the 1999 HGTV Tournament of Roses Parade.

However, it wasn’t long before HGTV had hired their own internal web developers and began to build their own site themselves, and I was out of a job.

Well, my boss at the software company soon moved to Atlanta to work for a startup web site called WebMD.com, and in a few months he offered me a job in Atlanta. I worked as a senior web developer at WebMD for almost eight years.

Of course, all during this time – I kept trying to quit building web pages and start traveling as a preacher and speaker, but never could quite get anything going. I had a few speaking engagements here and there, but nothing regular or that I could consider a full-time speaking career.

And again, I wondered why God wasn’t opening the door for more speaking engagements? Almost everywhere I spoke, people would tell me, “Joshua, everyone in the world needs to hear your story...” and stuff like that – and that would spur me on to try to do everything I could to get more engagements, but nothing would happen.

## **Inspiritnews.com**

In 2004, I was reading some news sites on the web, and thought about how many sites there were which had all the “bad” news from around the world on them. In fact it seemed there were many sites that only liked to tell the bad stuff.

I decided that I would start a “news” site that would only tell good news! I launched [inspiritnews.com](http://inspiritnews.com) that year. The word “inspirit” means to inspire, and I wanted a website that would inspire people and change their lives.

I soon began to realize why God wanted me to learn how to build web pages, and spend time working in the web development field – He knew I could reach a LOT of people around the world with the websites, brochures, and articles I would post on the web, and I needed to know how to build the pages and utilize the latest technology to create sites like [inspiritnews.com](http://inspiritnews.com) and others.

From 2004 until 2011, I had over 50,000 visitors to [inspiritnews.com](http://inspiritnews.com) from over 130 different countries. And, I have received emails and letters from people all over the world. Most of these people I never could have reached had it not been for the web and God's plan in causing me to have to get a job I really didn't want or plan on getting.

When I was in college, if you had told me I was going to be building web pages and reaching people that way. Well, number one of course, the web wasn't around back then – so I would have asked, "What is a web page?". But also, I would have said, "No. I am going to be an evangelist and a preacher."

Many times in our lives we think we have everything planned out perfectly, and we get upset with God when things don't seem to go like we think they should. However, when we learn to truly trust Him with everything – we see that He has a perfect plan for each and everything that happens.

## **A Letter**

One of the only disappointments with reaching people via a medium like the web and printed publications, is that you never really know how many people's lives you are having an impact on. Of course, you never know how many lives you impacting just by your daily life – we all make an impact on each life we come in contact with. And that reminds me of another story.

The summer after my sophomore year at college, I worked at a discount store in Conyers, Georgia. I worked during the evenings when the store was closed, restocking merchandise and things like that.

There were 3 other college guys who also worked that shift with me. And they seemed like good guys, and they were always nice to me. However, during our breaks, they would sit on one side of the break room reading bad magazines or talking about things I wasn't interested in. I would sit on the other side of the break room reading my New Testament or something else. I never really thought much about it. I just did what I thought was right, and tried to be a good example.

Well, several months after the summer job was over and I was back at college, I got a letter from one of those guys. The letter stated that because of my testimony while we worked together he had surrendered his life to God and was studying to become a preacher.

I had no idea that my life was impacting theirs, but it happens all the time. But... let me get back to the purpose of this section...a letter.

As I continued to develop inspiritnews.com and write articles that were on my website and other sites around the web, I never really knew how much God was using these things to reach people. I had always envisioned speaking to large crowds where I could actually see the people and at least some of the effect my life was having on them.

While it is true that God was using my written words to reach people – many of them never thought to take the time to let me know.

In 2010, I got an email from some people that said;

*“Hi Joshua, I have received your email newsletter for several years and always appreciate it and get encouraged from it...We will be in Atlanta next week and would like to invite you to meet us for dinner...I can imagine this might seem like a strange email and that you could have misgivings about meeting strangers. We can certainly understand that. Whatever your decision, please know that you are touching others and having a wonderful, positive impact.”*

Of course, it's not every day you get an email from a stranger asking you to meet them for dinner. And so, I was a little nervous about whether I should meet them or not. Yes, the email sounded nice, but people can write whatever they want and pretend to be what they are not really.

I told a few of my family members about it and they expressed concern about me meeting up for dinner with some complete strangers. And my sister, who lives in Atlanta as well, said that if I was going to meet these people, she was coming with me just to be on the safe side.

So, we met up with this couple at a restaurant in downtown Atlanta. And they turned out to be a wonderful, Christian man and wife, with whom I have stayed in contact with, and we have become good friends...but I'm jumping ahead here.

After we had finished our introductions in person across the dinner table, the lady turned to me and said, “Joshua, let me tell you our story.”

She told how that several years prior, their oldest son was diagnosed with Crohn's

disease. He was having trouble sleeping, didn't feel well, and was having other physical problems. Things had even gotten so bad that he began to pray "God, cure me or kill me because I can't live like this." His disease had begun to affect the entire family, and they were quite discouraged and concerned about their son's future.

She had begun searching the internet for answers to how they could cope with this problem, and had found my website and read my story. Through reading my story and the information on my website they were given hope and encouragement.

I can remember exactly how she looked me straight in the face and said, "Joshua, your story changed our lives!"

I was blown away. I thought how awesome it was that God had brought these people into my life to remind me that yes, His plan was working, and He was using my life to reach others.

I later asked them to write a letter describing the events that led up to our meeting, and this is part of what she wrote;

*"I started searching on the internet for answers to how we could cope with this problem. I found your website that reminded me of the answer that I already knew – God is sovereign over everything! Inspirit News spoke to my heart in a profound and powerful way. I could imagine some of the emotions and turmoil that your parents must have struggled through as their small son fought for his life. Joshua, your story encouraged me and I decided to continue looking for answers and to have faith that God would provide."*

And the good ending to that story is that after reading my web site, they turned their son and his disease completely over to God. And their son is now completely cured from the disease, happily married, and doing very well.

A friend of mine read this couple's letter and wrote, "Joshua, God is using you in ways you can't even imagine!" That's the awesome thing about God. His ways are FAR beyond our understanding and He knows WAY more what to do with our lives than we could ever dream possible. All He asks is that we trust Him.

## **Radio**

In the late 1990's I started a radio broadcast that was on the air for about six months. The broadcast was a 15 minute broadcast, where I would encourage people in their walk with Jesus Christ. I had the broadcast on 3 small stations, one broadcast per week, one station in Kentucky, one station in Tennessee, and one station in the Caribbean. I used the sound system at the church I attended then to record my broadcast on cassette tapes and mailed them to the stations.

It was interesting that in the time I had that broadcast I never once got a letter from a listener. However, about 2 years after I had moved and cancelled the broadcast, I got a letter from a truck driver in California. He said he had been driving through Kentucky a couple of years ago, and had heard my broadcast. He had written down the mailing address on a map he kept in his truck, but had forgotten all about it.

The truck driver said he found the map two years later, and was writing me to see if my broadcast was on any other stations. That was the only letter I ever received from that broadcast.

In 2007, I decided to put together a new broadcast which I called Inspirit Radio after my Inspiritnews.com website. I found a network that had several stations, and they agreed to air my broadcast for a small monthly fee. So, I paid someone to record an "intro" to my broadcast, and produced it on my computer at home.

After only 3 weeks of being on the air, I got a letter from the network saying the management had decided to pull my broadcast off the air, because they were afraid people who just tuned in and were not familiar with who I was, would have a hard time understanding me at first and would not stay tuned to the station.

That was the end of my Inspirit Radio broadcast. But God would open more doors for me to reach people.

## **Speaking**

When I first started speaking, I mainly spoke in churches and Christian schools, and other Christian related organizations, like camps and retreats.

As a college student, and for several years after graduating, I spoke in churches and schools in Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Michigan, Indiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Colorado.

While preaching a Sunday morning sermon, or speaking to a group of high school kids, I was able to share my story and God's work in my life with lots of people. Many people were gracious in sharing how God used my messages to be an encouragement and inspiration in their lives.

I never really thought much about speaking at other events outside of the "church/school" realm, other than speaking a couple of times at a local prison or other ministry. After all, I had studied to be a preacher, and that's what I was trying to do with my life.

In 1991, I moved to Buchanan, Michigan and joined the staff of the Life Action Ranch. I was able to preach before many groups of campers and retreat attendees along with speaking in some local churches. And again, God graciously used my life story and messages to reach others and impact lives. I was on the staff there for 2 years, before they decided to change directions with the Ranch ministry, and I moved away.

Several years later, after I launched [inspiritnews.com](http://inspiritnews.com) and began to share my life story on the web, I began to receive letters and emails from people whom I wouldn't have reached at a church or school.

I began to get letters from parents who had young kids who were now facing cancer and other diseases. They would thank me for sharing my story online, and tell me how much hope and encouragement it gave them for their own kid's recovery from what the doctors gave slim chances.

While working as a senior web developer at WebMD, I had co-workers tell me, "Joshua, people who don't attend church need to hear your story too!" And I began to see the possibilities of having an impact on lives in a totally different way than I had ever imagined.

I created a new website ([joshuagoodling.com](http://joshuagoodling.com)) to get word out about my life story and find speaking opportunities.

In 2009, I got my first invitation to speak at a large conference. I got an invitation to be a keynote speaker at the Florida Public School Nutrition Conference and Expo in Orlando.

I flew to Florida, and spoke to a large crowd of people at the Conference. I shared



my life story, and the importance of making a difference in this world, and I handed out hundreds of my “One Week to Live” brochures.

At the end of my speech, the crowd gave me a long standing ovation, and I had person after person come up and hug me, thanking me for coming.

I later got a letter from the Director of the FSNA. She wrote: *“The conference evaluations are beginning to come in and so far they are showing that this is one of the best conferences we have ever had. The positive feedback is because of you and the part you played in making it such a success!”*

*On behalf of the members of this Association, thank you for making a difference in our lives and becoming part of our family. What a wonderful job you did — and how about that standing ovation!?!?!”*

I was so thankful to God for using my life to be an encouragement to those people. And in 2011, I got an invitation to speak at the South Carolina Public School Nutrition Conference/Expo.

God was beginning to open doors I never dreamed of.

## **Cancer Events**

In 2007, I began working for a new company named PGi, a business communications company in Atlanta. I was hired as the Director of Web Development.

One day an inter-office email came out that said the company was working to help raise money for the American Cancer Society, and would be participating in the annual Relay for Life. The message invited anyone who was interested in participating to a meeting in one of the conference rooms.

I had never been to a Relay for Life, but thought I would go to the meeting to see what it was all about.

After the meeting, I spoke to the person who was planning the company’s involvement with the event. I had not met her before, since she worked in a different department of the company. However, I told her that I would like to be a part of the event, and I gave her one of my brochures about my life story.

A few hours later, she emailed me that she had read my story, and wanted to know if I would be interested in speaking at the Relay for Life event on behalf of the company?

Well, naturally, I was interested. So for the next three years in a row, I was invited to speak at the event in which my company was participating.

I began to get invitations to speak at other Relay for Life events across the state of Georgia, and even as far away as New York State.

At all of these events, I had people telling me how much they appreciated me telling my story, and how it gave them more hope for their own future.

## **Juvenile Detention Center**

My best friend from college days, Ken Turner, invited me to Indianapolis in 2009 to speak to boys at the Marion County Juvenile Detention Center where he was working as a voluntary chaplain.

I had never been to a detention center to speak before this. I had spoken in a couple of prisons, but not to young people at a detention center. So, I had no idea how they would react, but took him up on the opportunity – even paying my own airfare and travel expenses.

Ken and I were sitting in the room at the detention center talking when some of the young guys who were serving time in the detention center walked in and sat down.

The minute they saw me and realized I was the one who was going to be speaking, they began to laugh and carry on. And when I got up and started talking, they laughed again. Of course, I am used to that, so I just continued talking.

However, pretty soon you could hear a pin drop in that room, as all of the young men sat there glued to every word I was saying. A couple of them even had tears in their eyes.

After I was done, Ken asked if anyone had anything to say. A young man who sat on the back row, stood up and said, “I have to apologize. When we walked in here, we all started laughing and making fun of Joshua. But after hearing him, I am

sorry we made fun of him.” And one by one several of the other inmates also apologized. They also said things like, “I’m never going to forget this man.”, and “If he can overcome all of the problems he’s faced, I can overcome the situation I’m in.” That evening, eight young men accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior.

After I had returned to home to Atlanta, Ken was leading another Bible study at the detention center on Monday night, a couple of the teenage guys said, "Where's Joshua?" Ken explained that I live in Atlanta and was there for a few days to visit but had to go back home. "Will he be back?" they asked. Ken said, "Yes, he will be back again at some point."

Then one of the new guys who had just been admitted to the detention center asked who this guy Joshua was. Another guy said he was a small guy about your size (pointing to the smallest guy in the room). Another young man spoke up and said, "No. Joshua is really tall. He is small on the outside but he is very tall on the inside."

I cannot write or speak enough about how thankful I am to Almighty God for using my life to make a difference in the lives of others. It is such a joy and honor to truly love Him and serve Him.

## **Why I Do It**

There's a television show on the History Channel called "American Pickers". In this show, two men ride around in a van searching the American countryside for antiques and collectibles that people have just sitting around, and they try to buy them and then sell them to antique dealers.

I don't have a television at home, but the other day I saw part of their show on the internet. During that episode they came to an old farm up in Iowa. The elderly man met them at the door, and after they told him what they wanted, he said he would show them around his property.

In the back of the property there was this large barn/shed building. The man said he hadn't even been inside the building in several years, and when they opened the door - it was filled with junk. There were all kinds of stuff in that barn just rusting away.

However, when the pickers would ask him if they could buy things like an old

rusty sign, a bicycle, and other items that had been buried for years under stuff the man kept saying; "No, I couldn't part with that."

Even though he hadn't even seen some of this stuff in years, or even remembered he had it - he had to hang on to it all.

That reminded me of a lot of people in this world who are so caught up in the possessions they have, their status in society, and many other things. However, none of these things really matter in the long run.

We live in a world where most people only seem to think about themselves, what they want, what they can get, etc. Which, to be honest with you, I do not understand anymore.

Yes - there was a time when I felt that way myself. That's human nature. Oh, I've always (as long as I can remember) tried to be an inspiration and help to others. But at the same time I was often seeking my own gain in certain areas of my life. Until, God showed me that this was NOT the way to find True Peace, Joy, and Happiness.

And when He opened my eyes to the reality that living for others and putting others first in my life (well, actually putting God first, and then others) made each day much better - I've never thought twice about how much of my own money I spend trying to reach others, how much money I give away to help others, and the time and effort I put into seeking to truly Make A Difference in this world.

I'm reminded of the verse in Proverbs 13:7; *"There is one who makes himself rich, yet has nothing; And one who makes himself poor, yet has great riches."* For, I've truly found that having this world's possessions and riches does not bring peace and joy. Yet making a difference in other people's lives brings more peace and joy to ones' heart than most could ever even dream of. The "pleasures" of this world may entertain us for a brief moment, but at the end of the day, they leave our hearts empty and seeking for more. They will NEVER satisfy. However, for so many - that's what they spend all of their time and efforts chasing after.

Recently, I was in the parking garage elevator at my office. There was one other person in the elevator with me. I pushed the button for the 3rd floor, and she hesitated a moment and then pushed a button and said; "I THINK that's where I parked. I never can remember." After we came to the 3rd floor, I started to step off the ele-

vator, and then reached into my computer bag and pulled out one of my "One Week to Live" brochures and handed it to her. I never thought about it again - I hand them out all of the time.

However, the next day, I got the following email from her:

*Hi Joshua!*

*It is the lady in the elevator from yesterday who thought she lost her car...yet again. I just wanted to thank you for sharing your story with me. After we parted ways, I got into my car and read your story before pulling out of my parking space. I knew what you had given me was too important to wait to read later that night. Your story brought tears to my eyes...not in sadness, but happy tears. You are a true inspiration! I love your faith and your never give up attitude.*

*Our brief encounter has touched me so deeply. I have bookmarked your website so every time I need encouragement, you are only a click away. I have shared your story of faith with my husband and co-worker and will continue to share your story.*

*Again, thank you for reminding me what is important in life.*

*Stephanie*

That put me on "cloud 9" for the rest of the day! What a blessing and privilege it is to see God work through my life. While I'm still FAR from perfect, every day I spend reaching others gets better and better!

I've actually had people in my various jobs throughout my career ask me, "Joshua, why do you do stuff like you do? Isn't that a waste of time? What do people do in return for you?" But, they're missing the picture. I do it for the pure joy it brings, and because the Bible commands it. It doesn't matter what people do in return, or what people say or think. What matters is seeing people smile, and knowing I've brightened someone's day. And I'm especially happy when I hear of people who have come to know my best friend in the world – Jesus Christ.

## The Secret

In closing, let me say that if it wasn't for my faith in Jesus Christ, I certainly wouldn't have been able to bounce back from the life changing events that I've encountered. I may have been able to act like everything was okay, and pretend to some degree that my life was perfectly fine, but on the inside, I would have known that the opposite was true.

Many people in the world get angry or upset when people mention Jesus Christ and how He can change our life. Or they point out the many people they know who claim to be a Christian yet live like (or worse) than everyone else, and use that to "prove" that having Jesus in one's life makes no difference.

The problem is many people claim to know Jesus. However, a lot of them only know "about" Jesus, and they mistake that for a personal relationship. A personal relationship with Jesus Christ will change one's life forever. I know that from my own personal experience.

I am reminded of the words written by Mylon R. Lefevre.

Without Him I could do nothing,  
Without Him I'd surely fail;  
Without Him I would be drifting,  
Like a ship without a sail

Without Him, I would be dying,  
Without Him I'd be enslaved;  
Without Him Life would be hopeless -  
But with Jesus, Thank God I'm saved.

Jesus, O Jesus, Do you know Him today?  
Do not turn Him away!  
O Jesus, My Jesus, Without Him  
How lost I would be.

The story is told of a mail carrier who lived in a village in Europe that had many rivers and waterways running through it. The mail carrier would use a canoe on his daily route to deliver the mail. He would paddle his canoe up and down those waterways every day. Yet, he never learned how to swim.

Many people over the years asked him why he didn't wear a life preserver or at least learn to swim. To which he would always reply that he didn't need a life preserver, and he didn't need to know how to swim. Nothing had happened to him yet, and nothing was going to happen.

One day as he set out on his route, a sudden storm came and it began to rain, and the wind began to blow hard. He wasn't afraid though, he had been through worse he thought. Well, he hadn't ever experienced a storm like this one, one of the worst storms in the history of the village.

During the storm his canoe was capsized, and unable to swim, he drowned. People had warned him for years, but not wanting to be weighed down with a life preserver or be bothered with swimming lessons - he had just ignored their warnings.

Many people in life are like that mail carrier. They have been warned and told time and again about what will happen to people who reject the love of God, but they think it's not true. The stuff the Bible says about hell and the price one will pay for not believing in Jesus Christ can't possibly be correct. In fact, some people have even gone as far as to say there is no God.

But just stop and consider something for a moment. Are you one of those people who have so far rejected Jesus Christ's offer of eternal life?

What if the warnings in the Bible are true?

What if people who refuse to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior will die and go to hell?

What if there is a penalty one must pay for the wrongs they have done in life?

What if you're wrong about there being no God?

What if you're wrong about believing in Jesus Christ not being necessary? Are you prepared to gamble all of eternity on that?

Everyone knows the story of the Titanic. People said it was indestructible, it would never sink, and now it is at the bottom of the ocean in pieces.

When man first invented the automobile, some people said if man ever went faster than 30 mph, it would kill him. However, now people fly jets at hundreds of miles per hour without even batting an eye.

When someone first mentioned the idea of a personal computer, they were told that people would never need a computer in their home. Today some people have multiple computers and our lives are completely wrapped up in them it seems. It's hard to even function without one.

In all of these above instances, people thought they knew everything. They thought they knew all the answers - yet they were wrong. Yet, none of these compare to the terrible tragedy many will face in being wrong about Jesus Christ.

Just think what a terrible tragedy it would be for someone to die thinking there is no God, or one doesn't need to believe in Jesus Christ, only to wake up in Hell and find they were wrong.

So, before you just brush off the possibility of there being no God, or no need for salvation - consider whether you're willing to take the "risk"!

And believe me, I know from experience that there is a God. And that salvation through faith in Jesus Christ can make your life the best it could ever possibly be.

*"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)*

With Jesus Christ in your life – you too can Bounce Back from the problems and trials that life may bring your way. As long as He's in control, we've NOTHING to worry about.

Website: [joshuagoodling.com](http://joshuagoodling.com)

**If this story has been an inspiration to you, please pass it along to others, and send your comments and letters to Joshua.**



