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YOUNG READER'S
EDITION

Go Create a
Life That Counts

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TIM TEBOW

WITH A. J. GREGORY

Mission Possible Young Reader's Edition

+ + +

Go Create a Life That Counts

Tim Tebow

with A. J. Gregory



WaterBrook

MISSION POSSIBLE YOUNG READER'S EDITION

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Introduction

I'm often asked, "What is God's will for my life?" Or sometimes it's phrased like this: "How can I find my calling?" or "What is my purpose?"

I've often wondered what we even mean when we use those words. I know how they are defined in the dictionary, but what do they really mean to us? Is it about choosing a specific career or making a difference? Does it have anything to do with faith? (Am I asking too many new questions when you're hoping to find answers?)

This whole thing reminds me of a funny conversation in *The Hobbit*. After finishing breakfast, Bilbo Baggins is standing by his front door, when none other than Gandalf comes waltzing by. Bilbo nods at the old wizard and says, "Good morning!" It's a typical early-day greeting that requires nothing more than a nod and a smile. But Gandalf is too deep for that.

He says to Bilbo, "Do you wish me a good morning, or mean that it is a good morning whether I want it or not; or that you feel good this morning; or that it is a morning to be good on?"¹

I suppose we each have a little bit of Gandalf in us. We can get hung up on questions instead of taking action.

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The Bible gives us one shared and big-picture purpose: to glorify God. As believers, we honor and serve Him with our lives, our natural gifts, the choices we make, and our time. The goal is clear. In His last instructions to His disciples, Jesus commanded them to “go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19–20).

Jesus wasn’t telling us to become career missionaries or plant ourselves on the other side of the world. Nor was He saying that we have to sing worship songs every second of every day. But it does mean that your big-picture purpose is to bring glory to God wherever you are. Right now. Not when you get your driver’s license or graduate from high school. Today!

Within that greater purpose of glorifying God, we find our purpose in what we do every day. Living a mission-possible life means doing the good works that God has already prepared for us to do.

This is what Paul was talking about when he wrote, “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). We can live mission-possible lives today because of what Jesus did for us on the cross more than two thousand years ago. This kind of life is possible only because of the sacrifice He made and the power given to Him to trample over death. When you live mission possible, you live a life that counts because of what God has done and is doing through you.

We are each on a mission to make a difference: a mission to

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help the hurting; a mission to reach the last, the lost, and the least. It looks different for everyone, and it's a lot easier than you think. Have you ever been going about your day, when suddenly, out of nowhere, you start thinking of someone and wonder how they are? Or you watch a commercial and your heart is touched by a need? Does your heart ache for the kid in your class who always gets picked on? The world is flooded with hurting people and messed-up situations. And while we cannot fix every problem, God can. What we can do, with His help, is bring some light to a world that is shadowed with darkness.

I wasn't always driven to help people with special needs. I first felt a pull in that direction when I met a little boy in the Philippines with his feet on backward. From there, my passion grew to help people. That's why in 2010, I was so excited to create the Tim Tebow Foundation (TTF), with a mission "to bring Faith, Hope, and Love to those needing a brighter day in their darkest hour of need."²

God has a special plan and purpose for you. Yes, you. By using what He has already given you, right where you are, you can make a positive difference in the world. This is my mission, and it's yours too. When you begin to live mission possible, you will begin to

- see what's possible with God
- make better decisions that make your life, and other people, count
- live with passion
- understand you have a purpose that reaches beyond today

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The greatest lie you may ever hear is that your life doesn't matter. *You're too young. You're not good at anything. Remember what you did last week?* How often do you hear those things whispered in your ear at night when you turn off your phone and lie alone in your bed?

It's hard to live mission possible when we don't fully believe that we are made in God's image, hand-chosen by Him and able to carry out works of eternal significance. It's actually impossible. You will never come to believe that your life counts if you think you are here by accident or if you're stuck in a space where you're just going through the motions.

Lean in a bit. If you have made the decision to trust in Jesus, you're not just an average person who got slightly better. You were someone who was dead to sin who is now alive in Christ. Take a moment and read that again. You were *dead*, and now you are *alive*. Wow!

Through His death and resurrection, Jesus has brought each of us from:

old to new,

dead to alive,

sin to righteousness,

slave to son or daughter,

bondage to freedom,

darkness to light,

lost to found.

I hope that fires you up as much as it does me!

When you believe that you are valuable and worthy because of

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who lives inside you, everything changes. You find meaning. You live with purpose. And when you soak in the truth that you were created in the image of God—by love, in love, and for love—you begin to see the world differently. You see people in a new light. Your eyes open to hurt, and your heart hopes for the hurting.

Tom Cruise gets major props for doing most of his stunts in the *Mission: Impossible* films. He plays Ethan Hunt, an agent of the Impossible Missions Force who, with his spy team, will do whatever it takes to save the world. As Ethan Hunt, Cruise engages in stunts that require serious training, defy gravity, and risk death.

In *Ghost Protocol*, Cruise scales and hangs off the tallest building in the world: a Dubai skyscraper that stands 2,716 feet tall. Oh, and he's using only a pair of climbing gloves to do it. We find Cruise fiddling with an underwater security system in *Rogue Nation* and having to hold his breath for six minutes. (The average person can hold his or her breath for one or two minutes.) The same movie features Cruise dangling off an Airbus A400M while it takes off, reaches an altitude of about five thousand feet at 184 miles per hour, and then lands.³ (He was wearing a harness, but still.) Then there's the opening scene in *Mission: Impossible 2*—the one where Cruise hangs from a cliff with his bare hands. He was fitted with a safety harness but refused a safety net.

My favorite scene is found in the first *Mission: Impossible*. It's arguably the most memorable in the franchise. Cruise executes a high-wire dive in the CIA building to hack a computer in a pressure-sensitive and secured vault. Most of the stunt is performed by Cruise. It's his core and balance at work while being suspended in one position, perfectly still.

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These stunts seem impossible for most of us. I don't know many people who could hang off the edge of a cliff by their hands or who would even want to try.

The good news is that when God is involved, it's always mission possible. Jesus may not have been pushed out of a plane at twenty-five thousand feet, but He did something even more daring: He defeated death. And if you are serving a God who has rattled the doors of hell and trampled over death, you can fulfill whatever He has called you to do.

In this book, I'm going to show you how to make your life count for God and for others and how to live each day with a greater purpose. I want to remind you that you are a masterpiece. That's right! You are God's masterpiece. You were created to do good things, in your own unique way, on your own unique journey.

Our time on earth is so short. I want to do things that matter. I'm so honored to be able to play sports, write books, and motivate others. But I'm most passionate about bringing faith, hope, and love to those needing light in their darkest hour through the work we do at my foundation. I try to live out of that passion, trusting that when I fall short or don't have a map for what's next, God has it all under control.

We serve a God who is much bigger than an impressive character in a fictional movie. We serve the God of this universe, who holds life itself in His hands. He is in this with you. He is beside you. He is rooting for you, and He is fighting for you. Remember, with Him, all things are possible. What are you waiting for?

Let's take that first step, together!

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Mission Proposal, Mission Purpose

I've always believed the mission is greater than the man.

—RICK PERRY

The Sierra Madre has one of the largest rain forests in the Philippines. Situated on the island of Luzon, this rugged jungle is home to a surviving hunter-gatherer group called the Agta. Several years ago, a team of anthropologists set out to study this Indigenous group of people. The researchers were curious to learn more about how the Agta valued the members of their tribe based on their individual contributions. They discovered that out of all the different trades and talents these people possessed, including fishing and cooking, the people the Agta held in highest regard were storytellers.¹ Imagine that! The folks who spun tales had a higher status than those who literally brought home the bacon (and the snacks and drinks).

But most of us love a good story, don't we? Stories matter. They

keep us entertained. They can carry on family traditions through generations. Stories can engage and inspire a single life or go on to change thousands.

When I began to think about how to propose to my then girlfriend, Demi, I knew it had to be a great story. I wanted to offer my future bride an experience that she would never forget, one that would make butterflies flutter in her stomach each time she retold it. Okay, fine, and maybe, just maybe, there was smidgen of ego in my motivation. I wanted to be the awesome fiancé who crushed this monumental task. (What can I say? I'm a competitive guy, even with myself.)

There were three things this story had to have: special people, a beautiful location, and the element of surprise. The goal was to have a mission-possible mission proposal for the girl of my dreams.

The ring had to come from Africa, my bride's homeland. I met with a jeweler who recommended an "internally flawless diamond," which is exactly what it sounds like. It was also responsibly sourced and had a story of its own—how and where it was discovered and the detailed processes it underwent to be crafted—recorded in a beautifully designed book.

Giving gifts is my love language. Having found a woman who to me was the epitome of flawless beauty in so many ways, I knew this was the ring for her.

I had found something beautiful to give to the love of my life. Now to create the element of surprise. Unbeknownst to my bride, I had arranged for my family, both sets of Demi's parents, and her best friends to be present the moment I popped the question.

Special people? Check.

The big moment would come on January 9, after a belated and (wink, wink!) pretend Christmas celebration with my family in Florida. Over the actual holidays, I was helping to cover the national championship between Clemson and Alabama for *SEC Nation* and ESPN. Demi and I flew from South Africa, where we had spent Christmas, to the States. At the ESPN party before the big game on January 7, Demi and I met the president of Clemson, Jim Clements, and his wife, Beth. They are some of the sweetest people you'll ever meet. They have four children, including a daughter named Grace, who has special needs, and host a Night to Shine event in their community. (I'll talk more about Night to Shine in a later chapter.) The four of us became fast friends. Fast-forward to the pregame show. Right after filming for *SEC Nation*, I looked around and noticed Demi was nowhere to be found. I sent her a text saying I had to be down on the field for the first part of the game but that we could meet up after. Her reply was shocking: "That's fine! I'm hanging out with Jim and Beth in their box!"

What? As a good southern boy would say, "Bless her heart." I mean, Jim and Beth are absolutely wonderful people, but Demi doesn't understand American football allegiances! While I don't necessarily root for Alabama, I do work for *SEC Nation*. But Demi's decision to hang with the Clementses says a lot about her. Even if she had understood the difference between the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) and the Southeastern Conference (SEC), it wouldn't have mattered to her. She appreciates people just for who they are. It's one of many reasons I fell in love with her.

Demi and I arrived in Jacksonville, Florida, my hometown, on

January 8. We spent the next day celebrating “kid Christmas” first. All the nieces and nephews gathered at my house and unwrapped their gifts, and then it was time for the adults to unwrap their gifts, one person at a time, one gift at a time. After each gift, we took time to talk about it. You can imagine how long the process took.

In order to create a proposal that was unexpected, I did something that you might think is borderline unfair. As we opened presents with my family that morning, I gave Demi a small velvet box. I knew what she really was hoping to find in that box, even though she'd never say it out loud. When the box clicked open, Demi's eyes widened and she beheld . . . not an engagement ring. I figured getting her a non-engagement ring would take care of any expectations she had of getting a real one. To her credit, Demi was so gracious about her gift.

We continued unwrapping presents for a while. Once we finished, it was time for Mission Proposal, which would happen in the backyard of my parents' farmhouse. The plan was for everyone to meet for dinner at my parents' house nearby. Some of the women suggested to Demi that she dress up since Christmas dinner at the Tebows' was a formal thing (not true, by the way—more like jeans and T-shirts or pajamas). I had something else planned to further throw Demi off the scent of an engagement. A friend who worked at a local car dealership had dropped off a decoy truck that Demi and I were going to drive over to my parents' to give my father as his last gift. After the engagement actually happened, I'd return the truck to the dealership. (Sorry, Dad!)

The day was full with sweet surprises but none (yet) for my

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soon-to-be fiancée. I was positive Demi had zero clue of getting engaged that day.

Funny, on the drive over to my parents' place, one of our favorite songs just happened to come on. It was "The Wedding Song" by Demi's favorite South African artist, Matthew Mole—the very same musician I had flown in that day and had arranged to play live for her right after I asked her to marry me. The mood was perfectly set.

The engagement and post-engagement pictures had to be taken during the last hour before sunset so the lighting could hit just right with the backyard scenery. Photographers had camouflaged themselves behind trees and bushes. Microphones had been planted in secret so our loved ones back at the house could be a part of the moment and be ready to join us on cue.

Finally, it was time. We pulled into the farm but didn't go inside the packed house. Instead, I asked Demi to follow me behind the house, where the pond was. I told her I had something to show her. The sun hung low on the horizon. Crickets chirped in the background, and a slight breeze whispered on our skin. Beautiful location? Check.

So many fond memories flooded my mind as the pond came into view. Demi knew the pond was special to me. It was where our family buried Otis, the dog I grew up with. And it would be where, ten months later, I would bury Bronco, my next dog. By that pond, I had prayed about where to go to college. And now another event was emerging that would change the course of both of our lives. Demi and I walked to a wooden archway adorned with white flowers. Underneath was a bench, and under

the bench I had carved the following to mark the span of our dating relationship:

Timmy & Demi
4/28/2018–1/9/2019
Forever . . . My Sweets

I spoke from the heart. I can't tell you everything that was said, because that's just between me and her, but here are the lines that mean the most and I'll remember always: "Demi, I love you so much. I wanted to come here, to where I grew up, to a place that I love so much, with the person I love the most. When I first saw you, you gave me so much hope. When I first heard your voice, you gave me so much belief. When I first met you, I knew I wanted to spend the rest of my life fighting for you, fighting for us." I slipped down to the ground on one knee. "Will you marry me?"

She said yes.

After shedding a few tears and sharing some laughs, we held each other close as "The Wedding Song" played. It was a cue for the next scene in the story. As tears drenched Demi's eyes, a figure began to emerge from a stack of hay bales. It was Matthew Mole himself, strumming his guitar and serenading us live. Demi's face froze in shock. There he was, her favorite artist, playing for her right there in Jacksonville.

Matthew was also the second cue. As Demi and I swayed in rhythm to the melody, I gently turned us around so the back deck of the house was out of her view. "I wish your family could be

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here right now,” I whispered.

Demi nodded. “Me too,” she said, sadness in her eyes. We danced while the sun continued its descent under the horizon. After a minute or two, I turned her around and she burst into tears. Her parents and their spouses were walking toward us with arms outstretched. Third cue. During the tearful reunion, three of Demi’s closest friends came out of the house and joined the tear fest. Fourth cue. Finally, my parents and sisters and brothers made their way toward the wooden archway. As our loved ones followed their cues, photographers leaped from behind their hiding places and snapped forever memories of the happy occasion. Demi was visibly overwhelmed. She looked radiant, perfectly happy. Just seeing her shine in that moment was worth every minute of planning and secrecy. The proposal unfolded exactly on schedule and exactly as planned.

I’ll never forget what Demi told my dad when the night came to a close. “Mr. Tebow, I’m sorry you didn’t get your truck, but you’re getting a new daughter!”

Mission accomplished.

When I look back on the effort, thought, and time I invested in creating a story Demi would be excited to retell a thousand times in the future, I clearly remember the sense of urgency I had. While the grand gesture—the proposal itself—mattered, of course, the little gestures along the way were just as important. In the months before I asked Demi to marry me, I spent time each day doing a task, however small, to accomplish my mission.

Now, while I don’t approach every day with this much intention and focus and detail, there’s something to be learned about

how mission driven I was in proposing to Demi. Focusing our attention on the right things serves us well. I want this to be the way I live my entire life, including how I love Demi, serve and inspire others, pursue my dreams, and honor God. I don't want to be just a football player or an author or commentator, even though I love doing all those things and work hard at them. But I want my life to be so much more than that. I want to live a mission-possible life. I want to always strive to bring faith, hope, and love to those needing a brighter day in their darkest hour. That's the mission statement of our foundation, and it's also my personal mission statement.

When you strive to make your life count, you think less about how others see you and more about what God thinks. You realize that how you actually live has a greater impact than just putting your best self on social media so you can rack up the likes.

We are meant to do so much more than take up space or look good. We are called to love, care, pitch in, carry the burdens of others, and fight for those who can't fight for themselves.

A mission-possible life has less to do with us and more to do with others. Mission living means being motivated by something other than yourself. It's scary. But it's also pretty exciting. It can be unpredictable (but in a good way). It will require submitting your preferences to God. That means you choose His best over what you'd prefer, which isn't always easy. This is where trusting God becomes crucial. If you've made the decision to trust Him, He gives you the mission and makes it possible. Trust that He's got better plans for your life than you do.

Purpose over Preference

A man named Jonah learned that the hard way. In the Old Testament, Jonah was a prophet from the nation of Israel. Today I'd call him a foreign missionary. One day, God gave this prophet a mission:

Arise, go to Nineveh, the great city, and cry out against it, because their wickedness has come up before Me. (Jonah 1:2)

The people who lived in the city of Nineveh, the capital of the ancient empire of Assyria, needed a come-to-Jesus awakening. This nation had long been a threat to Israel, and they weren't living right. God had given Jonah a simple task: to preach. But apparently this didn't align with the prophet's preferences. Jonah hated the Ninevites. They were cruel, mean bullies, and in Jonah's eyes, they deserved to be destroyed, not given a chance to repent. God said, "Preach!" but Jonah's decision was to run.

So Jonah ran to a local port, bought a ticket, and set sail with other passengers for the city of Tarshish—in the opposite direction from Nineveh. Then God sent a powerful storm to get the prophet's attention. The raging wind and pounding rain whipped the ship without mercy, threatening to break it apart. The sailors on board threw their cargo into the sea to lighten the load and prayed to their false gods for help. And Jonah? Well, he was curled up in his bed, fast asleep and clutching his blankie.

The sailors wanted help from whatever god might possibly be

listening. They woke Jonah up and begged him to pray to whomever he worshipped. Then they interrogated him. *Who are you? Where are you from? What are you doing here? Whom do you serve?* Realizing the storm wasn't leaving anytime soon, Jonah fessed up and admitted the storm was probably his fault. Then he suggested they toss him overboard. Some of them probably thought that wasn't the worst idea they'd ever heard, but they still hesitated at first. Eventually, they got desperate and pitched Jonah into the sea. And wouldn't you know it, the instant his shivering body hit the water, there were clear blue skies.

I don't know how good a swimmer the prophet was, but he must have been freaking out while treading in waters so deep he couldn't see the bottom. Then, as Jonah gasped for breath, a great fish shimmied up and swallowed him whole, and he stayed in the creature's belly for three whole days. Before Jonah checked out of his aquatic Airbnb, he cried out to God and repented. Then God nudged the fish again and it vomited Jonah out onto the shore. (I know, gross.)

Before Jonah had time to take a very long shower, God repeated his mission: "Arise, go to Nineveh, the great city, and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you" (3:2). This time Jonah wised up and preached to the entire city. It was one of the most successful revivals in the Bible. Even the king repented. And instead of destroying the city because of its evil ways, God poured out compassion, love, and forgiveness. You'd think Jonah would be thrilled. But he wasn't. He basically told God that he wished he were dead.

Here's what was going on in Jonah's mind: He was a prophet,

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so his job was to say things that were supposed to come true. Jonah had preached destruction to the city of Nineveh before, but God, who is filled with kindness and mercy, changed His mind. He didn't want to destroy the Ninevites; He wanted to show them His love. For Jonah, however, as a prophet, doing so was going to make him look bad. The prophet was more concerned about what his fellow Israelites would think of him than about God's fulfilling His greatest mission on earth: saving humankind.

I think deep down many of us can relate to Jonah. Have you ever been afraid to make a difference for God because it might make you stick out or look weird? Have you ever not done something He wanted you to do because you knew others would probably tell you it was dumb? You may not win a popularity contest by being mission driven, but you'll certainly gain the favor of your Father in heaven. And isn't that what counts?

I admire my dad's boldness now, but that wasn't always the case. I remember that the few times we went out to eat as a family growing up, we'd always pray before the meal. For most people, this means huddling up, bowing your heads, and whispering a short and simple pre-dinner prayer. But Dad would blast his prayers so loud that the patrons three tables over would hear, "Because you alone, O Lord, walk on the wings of the wind" (see Psalm 104:3). I hate to say this, but there were times I'd slink low in my seat and cringe. Dad was never ashamed of making his faith known, because Jesus was always the most important thing to him. He didn't care if it made him look strange. Eventually I grew to admire and respect that about him and would get irritated at the people who made fun of him for it (and there were many).

If we want to make our lives count, we have to be a little different. We have to do things a little differently. Why would we want to be like everyone else?

Living a life of significance is more valuable than other people thinking well of you. Whenever you are forced to make a decision between purpose and preference, choose purpose. It'll win every time.

Live Like You're Running Out of Time

A few years ago, I was covering the Heisman ceremony for ESPN in New York City, where Demi, my fiancée at the time, lived. As crammed as our schedules were, I knew it'd be a real miss if I didn't plan something fun for us to do. At the last minute, I got tickets to see the Broadway show *Hamilton*.

Lin-Manuel Miranda wrote this unique retelling of the story of Alexander Hamilton, one of America's founding fathers. Hamilton helped write the Constitution and was the first secretary of the United States Treasury and the creator of the American financial system. As Lin-Manuel put it, "This is a story about America then, told by America now."²

To say I loved *Hamilton* is an understatement. The songs, the ideas, the acting—can it get any better? This actually was my third time seeing the show. But I was going to walk out of that theater after the final curtain fell feeling God prick my heart. And it would respark a mission.

Alexander Hamilton was a beast when it came to writing. Act 1 of *Hamilton* closes with a song called "Non-stop." After the Rev-

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olutionary War, Hamilton partnered up with John Jay and James Madison and between October 1787 and May 1788 wrote what came to be called the Federalist Papers. The eighty-five essays were published anonymously and for the purpose of defending the Constitution. John Jay wrote five, James Madison wrote twenty-nine, and Alexander Hamilton wrote fifty-one. The song “Non-stop” captures Hamilton’s stubbornness and persistence. When the character Hamilton started singing the part about writing “like you’re running out of time,” I knew that God wanted me to hear something special.

*How do you write like you’re running out of time?
Write day and night like you’re running out of time?
Every day you fight, like you’re running out of time
Like you’re running out of time.³*

Those lyrics played in my head for the rest of the show but in a different way. I heard,

*How do you live like you’re running out of time?
Do you fight for people like you’re running out of time?
How do you love Jesus like you’re running out of time?
Do you live like you need Him to survive?*

I am inspired by Hamilton’s passion and fire for pioneering revolutionary legislation and defending the cause of independence. This was a good and important cause, one that was historically necessary. But it’s not a greater cause than the cause of

Christ. Hamilton was fighting to defend the Constitution of the United States. We, as believers of the Truth, are fighting to shine light in darkness.

After the musical, my attention turned inward. I truly felt in the bottom of my heart a sense of urgency about how I was living my life, more than I ever had before. Centuries from now, are people going to be talking about my life, my choices, and my work with the same kind of passion and urgency? Would they say that I cared about people? Would they point to the fact that I lived on purpose? It's not so much that I care about what others think or say about me but that I want my life and legacy to speak volumes about how much Jesus loves this world.

If we truly believe in whose we are and know that people are hurting in a dark place, we must feel a sense of urgency to get to them and share with them faith, hope, and love. Does your life actually show a sense of urgency in what you believe?

If not, what might look different if it did?

Look Outside Yourself

Twenty-three-year-old Jaden Barr has had type 1 diabetes since he was fifteen years old, as well as reoccurring cholesteatoma, which has resulted in hearing loss in both ears. While he admits he has made mistakes and fallen short time and time again, Jaden desires to live a life that glorifies God and make the most of the time he's been given.

I met Jaden in 2015 through our foundation's W15H (pronounced "wish") program. I spent a few days with this amazing

Mission Proposal, Mission Purpose

young man. We even had the chance to work out together. Part of my mission was to encourage him, but by the end of our time together, he was the one encouraging me! Funny how God works that way so often.

In light of the health challenges Jaden has had to endure, he recognizes what it means to live a mission-possible life:

Without a clear mission, you're aimlessly going through life without intent or purpose. Experiencing firsthand the mission of the Tim Tebow Foundation has continually reminded me that God created me with a purpose: to know Him and to make Him known. It's easy to fall into the temptation of thinking life is about me and my plans, but I'm always reminded that the mission I've been given by God is much bigger and better than any worldly pursuit. By giving God control over my plans and following His instead, it makes the work I do have meaning and significance.

Right on, Jaden. This incredible young man truly has a heart that desires the greater things, what Jesus called "the good part" (Luke 10:42), or as the New Living Translation puts it, the "one thing worth being concerned about." And what exactly is that one thing? Pursuing God, sitting at His table, being in His presence without worry, fear, anxiety, popularity building, or winning a title. It's not that we never think about those things, but we don't let them dominate our vision. We strive and strain forward in this life with Jesus as our focus, with His will as our goal, and

with His rewards as our prize.

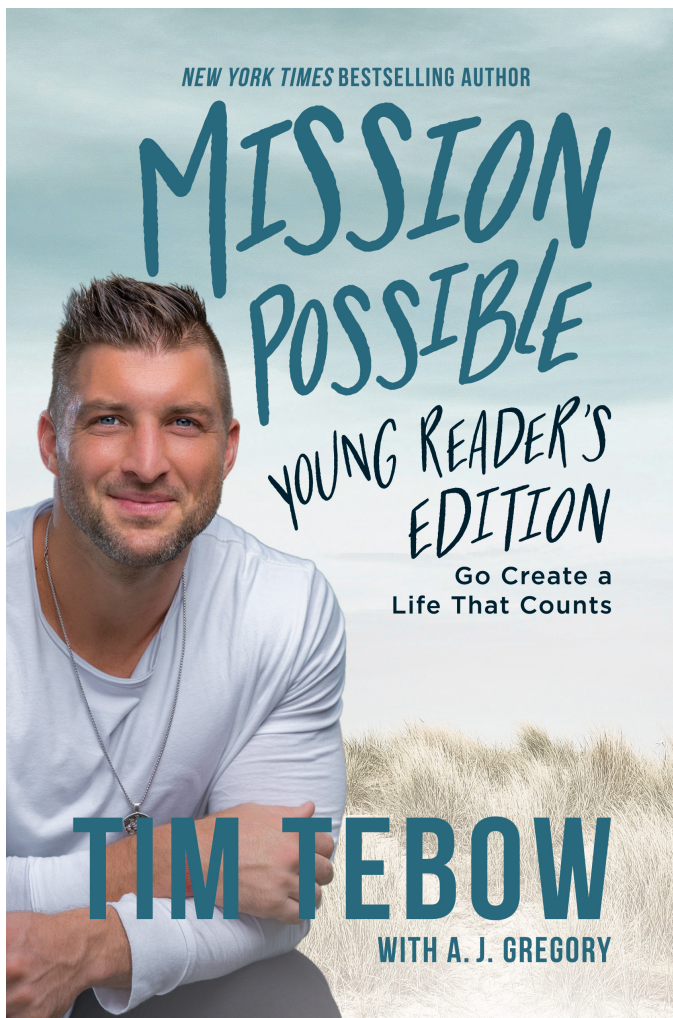
My friend Jaden knows the dangers of living for himself. Life can't be all about us. This is tempting for all of us, no matter if we're young or old, a parent or a preacher, a student or a teacher. I love what Jaden once shared with me:

You'll end up empty if you make life or your mission about yourself. I feel most fulfilled and in line with my purpose when I'm looking outside of myself and my own desires and putting that energy into pouring into others. When you look outside yourself, that's where true mission is found.

Both Jaden and my engagement to Demi remind me of the power and passion that comes when you focus your energy outside of yourself. I want to live each day more alive and more passionate because of what Jesus has done for me. The past—His death and resurrection—keeps me motivated in the present to change the future.

When you get tired or overwhelmed or uncertain, don't forget when God changed your life. If you're reading this book right now and you don't know Him, that time can be now. Choose to trust Him in this very instant.

Don't forget the moment He challenged you to join the fight. And remember, you have a specific role to play in bringing faith, hope, and love to a world in need.



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