

*the*  
POWER  
*of an*  
ORDINARY LIFE

*Discover the Extraordinary  
Possibilities Within*

HARVEY HOOK



TYNDALE HOUSE PUBLISHERS, INC. CAROL STREAM, ILLINOIS

Harvey Hook shares from his own experiences, as well as those of others, as he leads and instructs readers in developing their lives as difference makers. There is something in this book for everyone seeking to influence and inspire others.

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*author and motivational teacher*

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KIM PHUC  
*Victim of a U.S. napalm bomb  
attack during the Vietnam War*

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*founder, The Columbine Redemption*

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God is the one who puts the power in an ordinary life. The moment we allow the Lord to live in us, we can meet any challenge. This book is a wonderful guide and companion as we pursue our true calling from God.

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The easiest way for us to change the world is to first touch the person next to us. *The Power of an Ordinary Life* is the perfect blueprint for changing the world forever.

JACK HANNA  
*host, Jack Hanna's Animal Adventures*

Time changes, world order changes, people change, nations change, and ethics change, but God never changes. The old excuse of "everybody else is doing it" will not hold up when we stand before God. In *The Power of an Ordinary Life*, Harvey Hook powerfully applies God's Word to today's events.

BOBBY BOWDEN  
*head football coach, Florida State University*

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**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Hook, Harvey (Harvey A.)

The power of an ordinary life : discover the extraordinary possibilities within / Harvey Hook.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN-13: 978-1-4143-1344-3 (hc)

ISBN-10: 1-4143-1344-6 (hc)

1. Christian life. I. Title.

BV4501.3.H675 2007

248.4—dc22

2007017405

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Printed in the United States of America

13 12 11 10 09 08 07  
7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*This book is dedicated to my parents:*

*Gilbert Charles Hook*

*7/22/1908 – 3/11/1982*

*and*

*Helen Gertrude (Beam) Hook*

*10/17/1914 – 11/25/1992*

*in memory of their simple faith and their simple ways*

*and to*

*the three beautiful women given to me by God:*

*my wife, Rita, and our daughters, Rebecca and Rachel,*

*for all they have taught me about life, love and living in the moment.*



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# Acknowledgments

*Every agent and publisher who rejected my manuscript: Thank you. You made me dig deeper, refine my thoughts, sharpen my pencil, and pursue the message that has now been published.*

*Jay Kesler and George Verwer: Thank you for opening the door to Tyndale House Publishers.*

*Mark Taylor: Thank you for taking my call.*

*Ken Petersen: Thank you for believing in my message when no one else would.*

*Linda Schlafer and Dave Lindstedt: Thank you for sculpting my manuscript into its final form.*

*Larry Kreider: Thank you for giving me the freedom to write.*

*My mentors — Dr. Vernon Grounds, Mother Teresa, Tony Campolo, Immaculée Ilibagiza, Rich Van Pelt, Elisabeth Elliot, Oswald Chambers, Kim Phuc, C. S. Lewis, Rachel Joy Scott, Richard Foster, Jack Larson, Elvis, Bono, Johnny Cash, Bob Dylan, and Gil Larribas: Thank you for showing me the ways of grace and truth.*

*Dan Brake: Thank you for the innumerable phone calls. You totally “get it.”*

*Tom Lynch: Thank you for making me laugh on Thursday mornings.*

# YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

SERVING THE WORLD OUTSIDE OF YOURSELF

*What makes you qualified to help a person  
who has been knocked down in a car accident?  
There's only one qualification, that you happened  
to be there . . . to call the ambulance. That's it.*

*When you're lying down there, choking on  
the road, you're not gonna ask: "Excuse me,  
have you got a qualification?"*

—BONO

"LOOK AT me, look at my eyes. I am already dead."

He was on his way to court, uncuffed, to face charges of rape and sodomy. Instead, he brutally assaulted the police officer who was escorting him, took her gun, and went looking for the judge. He was not in a hurry. He ran into a deputy, handcuffed him,

and locked him in a closet. He went to the judge's chambers, handcuffed an attorney and a secretary, and secured them there. He walked calmly to the courtroom, shot and killed the judge and his court reporter, and then killed a deputy sheriff on the street outside while making his escape. On the run, and the focus of the largest manhunt in Georgia history, he confronted a federal agent in his home, took his gun and his life, and stole his truck.

*He was a dead man . . . just waiting to die.*

She was a twenty-six-year-old single mom who was working as a waitress and taking classes at a medical-technician school. Her five-year-old daughter was in the custody of an aunt. Four years earlier, her husband had died in her arms, the victim of a knife fight and stabbing. She was familiar with pain, failure, and despair. As a troubled teen, she had used hard drugs and had been arrested for various crimes. As a young adult, she was charged with drunken driving and assault.<sup>1</sup>

Then her life got turned around. She experienced love, hope, and acceptance at a drug rehabilitation center. She found God's forgiveness and discovered a reason for living beyond her present meager existence and the tragic memories of her past. Her life began to change as she focused on loving her daughter. She reached outside of herself through the compelling pull of God's love and discovered the satisfying fulfillment of simply loving one other person.

In spite of her failures, broken dreams, and dashed hopes, this once troubled soul, the most *ordinary* of people, somehow changed the world. Something new was born in her when she allowed herself to receive God's love and the acceptance of others. It was not a dramatic, immediate change-of-life experience, but a growing calm, an increased perception that God was aware

of her. As she cared for her daughter, her spirit softened, she experienced a sense of hope, and she felt that she had a reason to live.

*Her reason for living was about to be tested . . . in the most extreme way.*

When fugitive Brian Nichols placed a gun to Ashley Smith's ribs and forced his way into her apartment, she thought her life was over. She later said her first thought was that Nichols was going to strangle her. Instead, he took her into the bathroom, tied her up with masking tape, an extension cord, and a curtain, put a towel over her head, and took a shower.

Later, he wanted to talk. He untied Ashley and began asking her questions. She talked about the things that mattered most to her. She spoke of her daughter, Paige, and the tragic loss of her husband. She told Brian about her new faith in God, and the disappointment Paige would feel if she didn't show up for a visit on Saturday morning.

"Can I go and see Paige?" she asked.

"No."

Looking for some source of comfort, Ashley asked if she could read.

Brian allowed her to get her Bible and a copy of Rick Warren's book *The Purpose Driven Life*. She read aloud from chapter 33. Brian asked her to stop and read it again, so she did:

We serve God by serving others. In our self-serving culture with its "me-first" mentality, acting like a servant is not a popular concept. Jesus, however, measured greatness in terms of service, not status. God determines your greatness by how many people you serve, not how many people serve you. God shaped you for service, not

for self-centeredness. Without a servant's heart, you will be tempted to misuse your shape for personal gain.<sup>2</sup>

Brian was moved by these words and began to talk again. Later, Ashley described what he said to her during those tense yet intimate moments. "He thought that I was an angel sent from God. And that I was his sister and he was my brother in Christ. And that he was lost and God led him right to me to tell him that he had hurt a lot of people. And the families—the people—to let him know how they felt, because I had gone through it. He looked at pictures of my family. He asked me if he could look at them and hold them."<sup>3</sup>

A bond, a trust—an unlikely connection—was developing between Ashley and Brian.

Brian hid his guns and asked Ashley to help him hide the truck he had stolen from the federal agent he had killed. She drove her car while he drove the truck. He allowed her to take her cell phone, but she didn't call the police. She wanted to further build his trust in her, so she made no attempt to escape. She wanted him to surrender, she did not want anyone else to get hurt, and she very much wanted to see Paige.

They drove back to Ashley's apartment. Brian said something about being hungry, and Ashley cooked him breakfast.

He was overwhelmed. "Wow—real butter, pancakes?"

They talked some more, about God and their lives, and Brian agreed to let Ashley see Paige. He gave her forty dollars and offered to rehang the curtain he had taken down to tie her with.

She offered him hope and a reason to live.

"You're here in my apartment for some reason. You got out of the courthouse with police everywhere, and you don't think that's a miracle? You don't think you're supposed to be sitting here right

in front of me listening to me tell you, you know, your reason here? Your miracle could be that you need to—you need to be caught for this. You need to go to prison and you need to share the word of God with them, with all the prisoners there.”<sup>4</sup>

Brian asked Ashley what she thought he should do.

She told him, “I think you should turn yourself in. If you don’t, lots more people are going to get hurt. And you’re probably going to die.”

In the end, the bloody shoot-out with the police never happened. There was no kicked-in door with a super-cop taking command of the situation and overpowering the criminal, like in the movies. It was not dramatic, and there was no struggle. There was no fight left in the man.

If anything, it was anticlimactic.

Just before noon on the day after his escape from the courthouse, Brian Nichols gave himself up to the police, waving a white T-shirt in surrender. There was no need for drama, because a quiet work had begun in Brian Nichols’s heart. It was the work of a broken woman who was willing to reveal her fears and her painful past. She was transparent enough to talk about her love for her precious daughter and her new relationship with God.



Such stories don’t usually end this way. Many times the hostages die. So what made the difference in this case?

How did this young woman capture the heart of a killer who had evaded authorities for twenty-six hours while beating or shooting anyone who got in his way?

The ordinary and the commonplace made the difference, not the extraordinary.

Wouldn't you think that Ashley Smith would be the least qualified person to make a difference in the life of a killer? Wouldn't you think that a trained counselor, minister, or reformed ex-con would have been the expert of choice to intervene?

But Ashley was the one who made the difference, and I believe that you can make a difference in your world as well.



Three things in this remarkable story are common elements in the lives of people who make a difference in the world.

First, Ashley made a choice to *redeem the immediate moment*. She acted in a way that brought good to everyone caught in this grim situation. She was nearly overwhelmed with fear, but she pushed through her anxiety. Despite the crushing weight of life-threatening circumstances, she chose obedience over fear and hope over hopelessness. She responded to Brian in a way that rescued and redeemed him from his bondage to pain, hatred, violence, and despair.

Making a difference begins with a choice—often a hard choice—to act for the good of something or someone beyond ourselves. I call this “redemptive action.”

Second, Ashley *developed a relationship*. She connected with Brian Nichols on a personal level by sharing how her tragic life had turned around. She told her story in a real and authentic way, offered him hope, and made him pancakes with real butter. Though, on one level, she may have felt hatred toward him, she did not preach condemnation to him. She cared for him, even though he was a brutal murderer.

This was a “reconciling relationship.”

Making a difference always involves a personal, real connection with someone whom we may not even know, like, or choose

to be with. Reconciliation brings hatred and hostilities to an end and replaces them with harmonious relationships.

By the time Ashley left to visit Paige on Saturday morning, Brian had begun to find something that he had lost long ago. It was the beginning of restoration to a fellow human being that he had once thought of killing, and to the God that she reintroduced him to. Out of Ashley's brokenness, and from the seeds of hope planted in her by God, he discovered his own hope of finding God and of being reconciled with him.

Third, Ashley encouraged Brian to *seek spiritual restoration*. This is the natural conclusion to taking redemptive action and building a reconciling relationship. This is most powerful when expressed though our brokenness and our connection with God.

When Ashley chose to act “redemptively,” she related genuinely to Brian. When Brian encountered an authentic, non-condemning relationship, his heart was able to respond to Ashley and to the God she was getting to know. In the end, she helped to set Brian free to begin a path of spiritual restoration.

I call this “restoration to God and to your fellow man.”

Seven gut-wrenching hours in the lives of a single mom and a wanted murderer—from 2:00 A.M. to 9:00 A.M.—was all it took for God to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary.

That was God's plan for their lives.

God has a plan for your life as well.

Will you discover it and take hold of it?



*You are here for a purpose.* God did not place you in life's audience merely to observe, nor did he give you an audience for whom you must perform. He placed you on center stage in the midst

of the world he created, exactly where he wanted you. People, circumstances, triumph, and tragedy will act upon you.

What will you do?

Will you become the difference maker that God designed you to be?

Someone once said that the future belongs to those who live intensely in the present. Was that person talking about you?

Am I expecting you to have already arrived? No, not at all. Like you, I am still on the journey, and so is Ashley Smith. She is a recovering drug user, and at the point that she met Brian Nichols, she was on the road to getting clean, but was still having a hard time letting go of drugs.

I was very interested in reading the story that came with the following headline:

### HOSTAGE GAVE GUNMAN DRUGS

Yes, Ashley Smith, the unlikely angel, gave drugs to Brian Nichols.

When I read that, my first thought was, *That is not the profile of a difference maker. The opening story of my book has been destroyed! What will I do now?* Then I took a deep breath, looked deeper, read Ashley's book, and watched her TV interviews before drawing a final conclusion.

Here's what I discovered.

Brian Nichols asked for marijuana and Ashley didn't have any, but she had a small amount of methamphetamine. She thought

that by giving Brian drugs she might curry favor. When he asked her to take them as well, she declined. If she was going to die, she decided, she was going to die drug free, for the sake of her daughter. That's when Ashley finally kicked her habit. She couldn't bear the thought of disappointing Paige one more time by having traces of drugs in her blood at the time of her death. If not taking the drugs meant that Brian killed her, she was willing to accept it.<sup>5</sup>

She was finally willing to be clean at any cost.

She had discovered a reason to live, and if it cost her life to love her daughter in this way, she was willing to trust the outcome to God.

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#### REFLECTIONS

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*Take a few moments to reflect on these questions and write down your thoughts. The insights you gain by meditating on each response will help you personalize the principles of this chapter.*

*What are the "possibilities within" that you want to discover?*

*What is one small thing you will do today to make your ordinary life extraordinary?*

*Where does God fit in your equation to "change the world?"*

# Notes

## CHAPTER 1: *You Can Make a Difference*

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## CHAPTER 2: *No Little People*

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2. Ibid.
3. Charles Colson, *Against the Night*, (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Servant, 1989), 57.
4. Neelesh Misra, "Knowledge of Nature May Have Saved Tribes," *The Columbus Dispatch*, January 5, 2005.
5. Frank S. Mead, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religious Quotations*, (Westwood, N.J.: Revell, 1965), 126.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Harvey Hook** is the founder and executive director of The Gathering/Columbus, an organization that addresses the moral, ethical, and spiritual needs of business, professional, and government leaders. The Gathering partners with individuals, churches, and other organizations for the purpose of connecting men and women with a small-group experience designed to meet their personal, spiritual, and social needs.

Harvey launched the Columbus chapter of The Gathering in 1998, following eleven years of work with incarcerated and at-risk inner-city teens (with YFC/Youth Guidance, USA), and six years of work with severely and profoundly retarded adults and children.

Harvey is a graduate of the State University of New York (Albany), with a bachelor's degree in psychology, and Denver Seminary, with a master's degree in counseling.

He hosts a weekly television interview program, called *The Gathering*, which airs nationally on the Sky Angel satellite network.

Harvey and Rita Hook have been married for twenty-five years. They live in Dublin, Ohio, and have two daughters, Rebecca and Rachel.

The Columbus branch of The Gathering is affiliated with The Gathering/USA, an international organization headquartered in Orlando, Florida.

Programs of The Gathering include The Leadership Forum, which provides leadership and character-development training to address such critical areas as personal and corporate values, ethics, and integrity; and The Youth Initiative Project, a partnership of local and national businesses that serve the moral, educational, and character-development needs of youth.

Each year, The Gathering/Columbus sponsors a number of breakfasts where a local or national leader has the platform to share his or her faith with other business, professional, and government leaders. These include the Ohio Prayer Breakfast, in conjunction with the National Day of Prayer, and a fall Leadership Prayer Breakfast.

The Gathering/Columbus also partners with Mission Emanuel, an outreach ministry of The Gathering/USA that brings together people from around the world dedicated to improving the lives of people in the Dominican Republic by providing health care, education, and better living conditions. Teams from The Gathering travel to the Dominican Republic four to six times per year for the purpose of renovating, expanding, and building medical, dental, and school facilities to meet the needs of some of the poorest citizens in our hemisphere.

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For more information about Harvey Hook and the mission and work of The Gathering, visit the following Web sites:

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[www.ThePowerOfAnOrdinaryLife.com](http://www.ThePowerOfAnOrdinaryLife.com)

[www.GatheringColumbus.com](http://www.GatheringColumbus.com)