

## SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Message Series: Life Hacks  
Message Title: Trials  
Speaker: Pastor Kevin Myers (PK)  
Date: October 12, 2014

### **Icebreaker:**

A “life hack” is defined as *a tool or technique that makes some aspect of your life easier*. Several examples were given—live more healthily by not eating any food that has a mascot; put a red cap on your pen to safeguard it (no one takes red pens); use a AA battery and a gum wrapper to start a fire if you don’t have matches. Do you have a favorite life hack that you simply wouldn’t do life without? What is it and how did you stumble across it?

### **Message Overview:**

*Life Hacks for Tough Times and Rough Relationships*. What a timely new series! Who doesn't go through rough spots and tough times? Today’s message entitled “Trials” opens an eight-week study on the book James and the practical steps found in this portion of scripture to help with life’s tough moments.

PK opened with an overview of the book and how the theme of wisdom running throughout ties into the different spiritual conditions of the heart as described by Jesus in the parable of the sower in Matthew 13. He then turned his focus to James 1:1-12 and the heart of today’s message—**how to do life well through its inevitable trials and pressures**. He presented **two options** to consider:

1. Try to live free **from** “pressure” and be secure, or
2. Try to live free **under** “pressure” and be mature.

He then shared a **life principle**: In a world of **trying** (to be free from trials), you will be **tried** (face trials of many kinds), so mature to **trust** (joy in God who reigns and restores). Three life hacks can help in the journey:

1. **Learn** under pressure
2. **Laugh** under pressure
3. **Look** up under pressure

### **Discussion:**

(Leaders: The questions that follow are designed to stir reflection and discussion on this week’s primary Message points. Please read through them prior to your meeting, so you can be prepared to prayerfully pace your group well. And remember, as leader, your goal is to promote increased *biblical* awareness, as well as individual *self* awareness – a combination that with the help of the Holy Spirit, results in revelation and...transformation! Also, don’t forget to pause between multi-layered questions to allow time for deeper discussion.)

- At the foundation of today’s message is the parable of the sower—a story Jesus told to describe the different levels of readiness of the heart to accept God’s word. Read Matthew

13:18-23 and sketch out the four conditions of soil/heart and what happens in each when the seed/word is sown [make a chart on paper, do bullet points, draw a picture...something to create a visual to which your group can refer]. PK made the statement that the heat of the sun produces pressure in the seed, causing it to grow. What parallel can we draw from this to our own lives? Do you agree with the statement that pressure in life causes growth? Why or why not? How do people in the different stages tend to respond to life's pressures? [I serve me; God serves me and will remove my pressure; I teeter totter between serving myself and serving God; I am dead to me and serve God.]

- PK defined two differing directions towards which people tend to move when living under pressure. The first is towards the goal of living free **from** pressure and becoming secure. Where in the Bible does God promise that as Christ-followers that God will remove pressure from our lives? [Trick question...He doesn't.] The second goal is towards trying to live free **under** pressure and become mature. What do those two options look like in a practical sense? Towards which do you tend to lean?
- The goal of the book of James is to help people live free **under** pressure and use these moments to **grow** and **mature**. Read James 1:1-12 and remember, this is written through the pen of Jesus' younger, actual brother who grew up in the shadow of Jesus' perfection. What advice and/or promises are offered to us as we journey towards trusting God in all circumstances? What life principles can we draw from these verses? [Your group may want to come up with one that becomes your mantra, so to speak.]
- Wisdom is the overarching theme in the book of James. The author talks a lot about wisdom from above and wisdom from below. What does this mean? How does it tie into the four "soils" of the heart? What is the difference between a Christian who still looks like the world and one who doesn't?
- Recall the three life hacks, or tools, that PK gave for making life under pressure doable. How can each of those help? Which one do you find easy to do? Which do you find to be the most difficult? Read Proverbs 3:5-6. What does God ask of us? How can we know if we are living a life of trust in God?

### **Wrap-Up/Close:**

God did not leave us without options when it comes to walking life's journey in His steps. He sent us a Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to help us. In John 14:6 Jesus says of his impending return to Heaven, "*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—*" Keith Green wrote of this in his song "Rushing Wind." Let this song be your closing moment of worship and prayer. Either play it if it's available, or just read the lyrics.

Rushing wind, blow through this temple  
Blowing out the dust within  
Come and breathe your breath upon me  
I've been born again

Holy Spirit, I surrender  
Take me where you want to go  
Plant me by your living waters  
Plant me deep so I can grow

Jesus, you're the one, who'll set my spirit free  
Use me Lord, glorify, your Holy Name through me  
Separate me from this world Lord  
Sanctify my life for you  
Daily change me to your image  
Help me bear good fruit

Every day you're drawing closer  
Trials come to test my faith  
But when all is said and done Lord  
You know, it's been worth the wait

Jesus, you're the one, who'll set my spirit free  
Use me Lord, glorify, your Holy Name through me

Rushing wind, blow through this temple  
Blowing out the dust within  
Come and breathe your breath upon me  
For I've been born again

Read more: Keith Green - Rushing Wind Lyrics | MetroLyrics

**Throughout the Week: (Optional)**

(Leaders: Share these optional exercises for further study and growth with your group.)

Memorize Proverbs 3:5-6, "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*" (NIV)

Continuing reading the book of James in preparation for next week's message.

PK mentioned the story of Brittany Maynard's choice to die at a time of her own choosing and Kara Tippets' beautiful, gentle response pointing her towards Jesus. The entirety of her letter to Brittany can be found here: <http://www.aholyexperience.com/2014/10/dear-brittany-why-we-dont-have-to-be-so-afraid-of-dying-suffering-that-we-choose-suicide/>