

Praise for Your Average Joe Unplugged

Joe Schneller has an unusual capacity to see the profound in the simple, the eternal in the ordinary, and thus to catch glimpses of God's grace at work in everyday life, which, of course, is where we spend most of our time. I love his sharp observations and good sense of humor. But behind the humor is keen and valuable insight into what it means to trust, love, and obey God.

Gerald L. Sittser

Professor of Theology, Whitworth University, Spokane, Wash.
Author of *A Grace Disguised, The Will of God as a Way of Life,*
and *Water from a Deep Well*

Anything but average! Exceptionally warm and witty devotionals interspersed with excellent humor columns.

James N. Watkins

Humor columnist; Author of the humor textbook *Writing with Banana Peels*

Schneller writes and talks like a guy who rolls up his sleeves, goes to work, faces challenges, feels pain, works through struggles, gets tired, reaches goals, and finds victory through faith and gut-level logic. His devotions are laced with humor, honest confessions, Biblical lessons, and modern applications. . . . he's got a brand of street smart theology that is very appealing.

Dr. Dennis E. Hensley

Author of *Man to Man*

If you're looking for an honest, funny, encouraging devotional that does more than tell you to try harder to be a good Christian, look no further than *Your Average Joe Unplugged*. With helpful thoughts and strategic Bible verses related to real-life topics such as career, marriage, and dealing with fear, you'll find yourself encouraged even as you laugh and realize that you're not alone in your struggles.

Matt Erickson

Walk Thru the Bible Ministries

What “average Joe and Jane” readers are saying...

Former Marine Capt. Joe Schneller gives us a poignant view of his eternal Commander-in-Chief’s instructions for living a victorious life. His terse style cuts to the heart of each battle. His tough love and practical application of truth result in spiritual healing and victory. This is a must read for each “soldier of the cross” on active duty. Read it! You’ll like it!

Ken K.

Husband, father, grandfather, retired pastor

I highly recommend this book. It is filled with timeless truths of the Scriptures; transparent, from-the-heart stories; and delightful humor. Joe has an authentic writing style that mixes real-life situations with Bible truths. While reading *Your Average Joe Unplugged*, you will laugh out loud, be deeply touched, and be drawn into a closer relationship with Jesus.

Patty R.

Wife, mother, church administrator

Whether you’re a mom or dad, wife or husband, bread-winner or stay-at-home parent, you will laugh, cry, and nod your head in agreement as you read *Your Average Joe Unplugged*. Joe’s humor and insight demonstrate that we all share the same challenges in our human experience...and that through God’s grace, mercy, and infinite wisdom, in His eyes, we are all more than average.

Karen A.

Wife, mother, business owner

Your Average Joe Unplugged is succinct, profound, funny, and honest. In each short devotional, Joe speaks to the issues swirling in my heart and lifts my eyes to God. The humor pieces will have you laughing out loud.

Brian D.

Husband, father, executive director of a non-profit organization

What “average Joe and Jane” readers are saying...

This devotional touches on the everyday struggle of any man, dad, and husband. Joe’s gift of humor is able to reach a guy through the thickness of life and give him the freedom to laugh.

Linda A.

Wife, mother of four,

Editorial assistant for a Christian magazine

Your Average Joe Unplugged depicts the honest, average thoughts of Christians, thoughts that portray a daily and constant struggle with the world. Not only did this book help me renew my faith into something authentic, but did so using everyday scenarios in an exceptionally fun and witty style.

Jessica R.

Marketer, San Jose, California

Joe Schneller has an uncanny knack for understanding and breaking down the issues and daily struggles that the average Christian faces. His hilarious and insightful analysis of what it means to be a man in our modern society really hits home for me. By tying in Scripture that relates to the daily situations we all face, he has created a relevant, meaningful guide to help the rest of us “average Joes” navigate life with a clear sense of purpose and the knowledge that it’s okay to laugh when things get a little crazy.

Jason O.

Husband, father, deacon, construction estimator

Joe cuts away the nonsense and gets to the heart of the male condition with humor and insight. He puts into words many of the things I often think and feel, but struggle to verbalize. I found myself wondering if he is reading my journal or working in an adjacent cubicle! I highly recommend *Your Average Joe Unplugged*.

Brian W.

Husband, father, business owner

Joseph D. Schneller

YOUR AVERAGE JOE

UNPLUGGED!



**A Humorous and Insightful
Christian Devotional**

 **Nordskog**
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by Joseph D. Schneller

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Introduction

Eat at Your Average Joe's

IN the summer of 2008, I clung to the last knot at the end of my rope—a place I'd known well for the preceding 3½ years. I was the franchisee and operator of a low-investment restaurant, and, in the eyes of the parent corporation, I was floundering.

My customer-satisfaction ratings were low, corporate visits to my restaurant went poorly, and even the grass outside looked bad. Despite a high college GPA, an accolade-rich tour in the Marines, and 2½ years of productive business-management experience, I could not make my restaurant succeed in corporate's eyes.

For the first time in my adult life, I was failing.

Even from grand opening, personnel had been my biggest challenge. No-call/no-shows occurred regularly. Employees stole money. The labor market was thin, so proper staffing was a constant struggle. Sales were low, so I had to watch labor expenses carefully in order to maintain financial margins. I carried a staff of about forty-two, but, due to incessant employee turnover, mailed 112 W-2s one year. I had difficulties with managers. After a few years, I finally developed two excellent daytime managers, and decided to reduce my income for the sake of stability. A few months later, though, they gave notice to quit within one week of each other, each determined to move back to his home state.

What was happening? I'd sensed God's direction to this work. My wife and I had written Bible verses on the lumber used to construct the building. I'd dedicated my work to the Lord.

The two-at-once manager resignation was my backbreaking straw. Six months later, following great inner turmoil, I gave the keys back to corporate. With no more than a sense of God's leading and the hope of professional writing, I stepped into the void. This was the end of August 2008.

Six weeks later, Lehman Brothers filed the largest bankruptcy (based on assets) in the history of the United States, and the global economic crisis began. The job market shriveled.



With my wife and son at home and another child on the way, I remained unemployed through mid-March 2009. My writing produced but a few hundred dollars. After a vast job search, I finally found hire as an entry-level employee at a retail store directly overlooking my former restaurant. I made \$8.50 per hour plus a \$1.50 per hour shift differential for starting at 4 a.m. One of my peers was my former cook.

In June 2009, 9½ months after quitting the franchise, I gratefully began an ends-meeting job as an analyst with a large corporation.

That period of unemployment and underemployment represents the greatest struggle of my marriage and one of the greatest struggles of my life. It was a time of fire and flood. Regardless of my Christian walk of faith, the trial and turmoil brought me egotistically barren before my belief in an invisible God. Without financial stability, without personal success, in painful knowledge of my family's need and in full awareness of my inability to provide, I had to decide if I still believed in the God of the Bible.

I, like Jacob, wrestled greatly with the great I AM. Who is He? What is Truth? What is His Word? What's the deal with trials in general, with unemployment and work? And what about fear?

Thus I wrote. I launched a website—only operated through half of '09—and posted my pilgrimage. The first person in need of those words was me. The following year, those articles became a manuscript. The year following that, the manuscript became this book.

Let me be perfectly clear. I am not an ordained minister. I have never attended seminary. I haven't started a church. I am not a theologian and am no religious expert. I'm just Your Average Joe Christian, struggling along the narrow path.

Day 1

Dilemma of Faith

I'm not thrilled with God right now.

A couple of weeks ago, I would have told you that I was angry with Him. "Furious" was more like it. How could He treat me like that? Now, though, I feel humbled. But whether ticked off or chastened, I don't like this path I tread – the lonely wastelands of unemployment. And who's to blame? The Sovereign One, that's Who. Which puts me in a dilemma of faith.

I know that He has never been wrong, never sinned, and never botched a judgment call. He has no smudge or smear on His character. Because of His character, He cannot sin. Not only can He not tolerate sin, but He doesn't even have that piece of Him that does it anyway. Like me – I'm like that. I'll do it anyway, the wrong thing, the selfish thing: I'll click on the picture, I'll get mad and cuss, I'll fantasize about swinging a Hyundai at a business associate's head.

But God doesn't ever blow it.

He's perfect. And if I stop for a minute, I realize that His perfection is like eternity in that it freaks me out. Let's be honest: even with heaven, there's something deeply unnerving about forever. And perfection? I'm a perfectionist by impulse. That means that I can live in a state of perpetual self-hatred, because I desperately strive for the unattainable.

But back to God and His infinite perfection.

You only have to get a few pages into the Bible to find where God regretted something He did. "The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The Lord was grieved that He had made man on the earth, and His heart was filled with pain." (Genesis 6:5–6)

There are two important points here. One is that, at that moment in time, the Lord was grieved that He'd made man. The other point is that this happened only six chapters into the first book of the Bible. In my Bible, that's on page four out of 923. That means that God was deeply disappointed after getting through less than one-half of one



percent of His revealed Word to man.

So, God was grieved. God was disappointed. Despite His perfection and my own displeasure with His choice for my life right now, I can relate to that.

Tomorrow, we'll talk about work.

Bread for Your Soul

Today's Scripture:

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." (James 1:2-4)

Today's Encouragement:

You are a work in progress, so don't be surprised when you feel the Master's pruning hand. Yes, it's painful. Yes, it's humbling. You are not alone in your suffering now, nor will you be alone in your joy for all eternity. Christ is getting us ready for a preeminently better reality. Hang in there by turning toward Him for refuge instead of against Him in anger. He will see your rickety sailboat through these troubled waters.

Today's Prayer:

Dear One, I choose to believe that You still are good. You are not toying with me. Despite Your periods of silence, You are not neglecting me. Finish Your work in me and shepherd me along so that, at my entrance into paradise, You will say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant." You are my all, Lord Jesus. Grant me refuge. I yield myself to You.



OK, now that it's just us guys, let's get down to business. You are a newly married man. While this is a great thing in many regards, you've quickly learned that your bachelor ways are Downright Wrong. Living with your new bride is not the same as rooming with Al and Pigpen. In fact, every rule of communication, time management, and cleanliness is currently undergoing a Drastic Overhaul. Tearing up a little? It's OK. We'll handle these one at a time. Today's topic: garbage.

At some point after the honeymoon (usually Day #2), your wife addressed the Division of Household Responsibilities. One of yours is taking out the trash. Why are you responsible for the garbage? Because it's in your genes, just like it's in your wife's genes to decorate the house with tiny books entitled *Friendship Is Forever*, *Precious Puppies*, and *Fuzzy Things That Squeak*. (Side Note: At some point, you will be tempted to place one of these books beneath the short leg of the kitchen table. But unless you enjoy indoor cold fronts, leave the books alone.)

You will notice immediately that your household garbage removal responsibilities have increased exponentially since your bachelor days. There are two reasons for this:

- 1) Your wife finds it Intolerable and Disgusting that you would even think of lining up empty soda bottles along the kitchen floor, and
- 2) Women choose waste baskets based on cuteness, not functionality.

When the two of you registered at Bed Bath 'n' Boredom or Linens 'n' Bling, you were astounded at the miniscule trash cans she chose. "That's a trash can?" you asked. "I thought it was a Christmas tree ornament!"

You see, women think that everyone is about 2½ feet tall (hence, the Triscuit-size books). Men, on the other hand, focus on the practical use of speed and power in the attainment of life's ambitions (hence, monster-truck competitions). So, when your wife looked at a waste bin apparently discovered in the Tea Cup Section and said, "How cute!" you looked and said, "Dumping Frequency: eleven times daily."

"But Poooooooooooooooooooo!" she protested, while every man in the store turned to see if his fiancée was calling.



Painful as it is, let's admit something: You caved. "It's fine, honey. Let's get it."

"But do you *love* it?" she asked, softly batting her eyelashes.

"With every cell of my being," you replied. "Except for the ones that are living."

"Pookie!"

Your idea of an appropriately sized garbage receptacle would probably be found at The Home Depot. Called "The Man Can," this stainless steel 55-gallon drum would be perfect for every room in the house. Seriously, if you had about a dozen of these bad boys, your dumping frequency would be bi-annual.

"That'd be awesome!" you say. Problem is, it ain't gonna happen. No, not even if you paint Chihuahuas and daisies all over them.

So, now that you've forfeited The Battle of The Can, you focus on strategy.

Fact #1: A single discarded box of Honey Nut Cheerios hopelessly overflows the kitchen garbage trinket.

Fact #2: If you don't finish off the cereal, then there's no empty box to throw away.

That's right, Pookie Bear, your new habit of leaving an ounce of Dorito dust while claiming, "There's still stuff in the bag" is not unique to you. No, this is your Young Husband Instinct kicking in. Thing is, the women are on to us. Your wife may even say she won't buy more Doritos until you throw out the old bag. Ouch.

Hold on a second. Our intelligence sources reveal that some wives may still be reading this article. Time for some evasive maneuvers... For decades, truck lovers have argued whether Ford or Chevy creates the manliest vehicle. Horse for horse and torque for torque, our review reveals that the new F750 Mega Stallion, capable of towing Long Island, represents....

All right, that probably lost them. So, how few Cheese Nips can you leave in a box without getting caught in Garbage Duty Avoidance? After an exhaustive nationwide study, the answer is: You can't play that game. She'll bust you every time.

* Published online at YourHub.com, Nov. 2006; Fresh Joy Media, 2007.



About the Author



Joseph D. Schneller served as a captain in the U.S. Marine Corps and holds a Psychology degree from Whitworth. He is an alumnus of the Christian Writers Guild.

His publishing credits include *Focus on the Family's Thriving Family*, *Clubhouse*, and *Focus on the Family*; *LifeWay's Stand Firm*; and *Walk Thru the Bible's Indeed*.

He writes nonfiction and humor for adults, and fiction for children, youth, and adults.

He and his wife, Kippi, live in Colorado with their two young boys. You can visit him at www.josephschneller.com.

The Publisher's Word

Your Average Joe unplugged is not your average devotional. Yes, it is a daily devotional, with a month of Bible-based lessons. But it is far from ordinary. Rarely does a Christian devotional strike a chord the way this one does. Joseph Schneller—Christian man, business-man, and former Marine captain—knows human nature pretty well. He also understands his Savior, His Word the Bible, and its mandates. He treats these things in a very down-to-earth and humble, not to mention humorous, way.

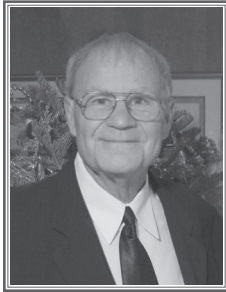
As the title suggests, the book deals with ordinary life. But cutting deeper than average, it reveals the tension between Christ's special calling on a man's life and our gut-sense that we are all just fallen sinners. Our gifts from God make us each unique, with a unique and high, purposeful calling in Christ. Yet, relentlessly, life continues to reduce us. Unemployment, unsuitable vocations, or even difficult times in a suitable vocation can drive us crazy. We feel helpless when our best efforts to provide for our families and homes fall short. We don't understand women. Responsibility for our families overwhelms us. Sometimes we find our plugs accidentally yanked from the power outlet. We feel, after-all, average. With unique insight and wisdom, the author both acknowledges our humble, sometimes comical, condition and encourages us toward Christ's Higher Way with confidence, by faith. This is life as a man of God.

Speaking of comical, *Your Average Joe Unplugged* further distinguishes itself by hold-your-belly, laugh-out-loud anecdotes on the foibles of being a married man.



Your Average Joe Unplugged is written primarily for men, though he already has some enthusiastic female endorsers; yet there are parts where Joseph asks his female readers to skip ahead. (Really, ladies, you do not want to know about this side of guy-hood.) Even so, women also will no doubt enjoy reading about the needful masculine Christian character, faith, and calling of this life in preparation and anticipation of the next. Women will appreciate hearing God's marching orders for us fellows, particularly the firm but gentle urging to grow up and be mindful of His things.

We expect you will truly enjoy this book. We expect you will grow. We look forward to the advancement of the Kingdom of God through careful attention to the simply rendered Biblical wisdom found in these pages. *Your Average Joe Unplugged* will no doubt make you want more from this not-so-average author.



— Gerald Christian Nordskog
Publisher

Resurrection Sunday, April 24, 2011