

# LIFE HACKS



**LIFE HACKS: Week 2**  
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## Life Hacks

**Week 2:** Emotions

**Bible:** Proverbs 3:5-6; Matthew 6:25-34

**Bottom Line:** Remember the difference between *feelings* and *truth*.

**Main Question:** Which one am I putting in charge: feelings or truth?

## SUPPLIES

- A printout of the following emoji or a mobile device you can show these on for the student who needs to see it. If you print the page out, be sure to cut it into strips so just one is on each. You'll need one per team.
1. [face with tears of joy]
  2. [exploding head, American football]
  3. [face with starry eyes, headphones, European castle]
  4. [winking face, mobile phone, dollar banknotes, books]

## OPENING GAME—THE TELEPHONE GAME (Hacked!)

Most students have experience with or have at least heard of The Telephone Game.

But, don't worry.

It's a simple enough game to explain.

One person starts off with a message.

They verbally pass that on to the next person in a single-file line.

Once they are telling the next person, they cannot go back and ask anything from the person who told them the message.

The person giving the message says it twice and then stops speaking.

This process continues until it reaches the end of the line.

The last person in line has to share what message they received.

That end message is compared to the original message.

The one whose final message is closest to the original wins.

However, similar to week 1, this game is getting hacked today.

Instead of using phrases made up of words, we are passing along emojis.

Each round, the emoji's increase by one in number through the 4th round.

The first hack is to use an emoji instead of a phrase.

The second hack is that students have to draw the emoji on the back of the next person in line to pass it along, without making any sounds or saying any words.

They may not make eye contact with their teammate at any time or use any facial expressions.

The last person in line will try to describe what was drawn on their back instead of saying the phrase they heard.

If you want, you can have the last person draw the emoji on a whiteboard or piece of paper if that works better for your group.

To motivate students to move this along, give them a time limit for each round.

This would be based on the number of students in each team.

Teams should have at least five, but no more than ten students each, for this to work best; although you can run this game with whatever size you need to for your ministry.

The team that gets the closest in their description gets 100 points.

Second place gets 50 points.

If you're feeling generous and have at least three teams, hand out 25 points to the third-place team.

After all rounds are completed, total the scores and congratulate the champion team who had the highest total number of points.

If you want to hand out a real prize instead of just imaginary points, consider purchasing some emoji stickers to hand out to each member of the winning team.

## TEACH

I don't know about you, but it seems like whenever I play or even just talk about the telephone game, everyone has a story.

"I remember the time when our team was so close to getting it right..."

"When I played that game in elementary school, the team that won totally cheated!"

"It is so embarrassing to be the last person in line because you almost never come close to sharing what the first person was told!"

Whether you played this game for the first time today or have been playing it a long time, you know the variety of emotions that can come through the experience of playing the telephone game.

We'll talk some more about this game in a little bit, but for now, let's focus on that word—emotions.

Technology keeps changing so rapidly.

Students used to hand-write notes to pass to each other in the hallway or during class.

Then, with technology came the ability to send a text message to someone else through your mobile devices.

People used their creativity and found ways to type certain characters to make emoticons, or faces, that usually made the most sense when viewed sideways on your device.

Then that was elevated when small images were made possible and became known as emoji.

Now you could really express yourself with pictures that could add much richer meaning to the words you typed.

And as we speak, there are an increasing variety of ways to communicate beyond that if you have the right technology: sending messages with haptic feedback (that you feel), sending a drawing, sending a picture (usually edited), sending a voice recording, and of course—Animoji—emoji that are animated versions of your face.

And yes, you can use your phone to talk to someone or to have a video conversation with them too.

But it seems like all these options and variations of passing notes seem more popular.

Even though face-to-face communication is the best, some of us in here are even guilty of using technology to text or send emoji when we are in the same room with the other person!

Of course, none of you would do that in the middle of class...right?

Have you ever sent a text or emoji and been misunderstood?

Did someone think you were mad when you were just joking?

Or worse, did they think you were making a joke about something serious when you were actually trying to be serious?

Or, even leaving all the technology aside for a minute, can you think of a time you were crazy excited and happy?

Has anything made you really mad, frustrated, or even angry?

Have you ever been in the midst of a crowd of people and felt lonely?

Have you had a day where your emotions were all over the place that the best way to describe them would be like a roller coaster?

During all of life we have to learn how to process and work through the wide variety of emotions we have.

But during the junior high years, because of all the changes going on physically, the emotions you deal with are more complex, confusing, and intense.

Wouldn't it be nice if the Bible could help us with these emotions?

Well, it can.

If you really want to see the wide range of emotions, and sometimes raw emotions, in the Bible, you should read through the Psalms sometime.

This is a book of song lyrics or poems.

The people who wrote these expressed pure joy, frustration, fear, desperation, anger, sorrow, regret, thankfulness, and so much more!

However, you are already experiencing all those emotions.

You need help in how to process them and not let them distract you.

There are two books in the Bible we are going to look to today to find that help.

The first is called Proverbs, and it is a collection of sayings that give us wisdom for our lives.

Once you find that book, go ahead and look for the book of Matthew—a book written by a man named Matthew to tell the story of the life and ministry of Jesus.

As you are looking for both of those books, think back to your experience playing the telephone game—both today and in the past.

Have you ever said or thought, “That’s not what I heard her say,” or, “That’s not what I felt him draw?”

In the end, that game starts with people sharing the exact same message, but it often gets messed up as it is passed from one person to the next.

Each person in the game may truly believe they heard or felt something different.

But the truth remains that there was one specific message that each team started with, no matter how well or poorly they passed that message—or emoji—along.

In our lives, our emotions can be that way.

We can have emotions that distract us from the truth around us.

We feel like God isn’t here and no one cares.

The truth is that God is here with us and He loves us and cares about us so much that He sent His only Son, Jesus, to die for us.

So how do we get synced with the truth when our emotions can distract us or trick us into believing things that aren’t true?

First, check out **Proverbs 3:5-6. (New Living Translation)**

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.*

*Seek His will in all you do, and He will show you which path to take.*

## **1. Trust God**

In the simplest of terms, this Proverb is telling us to trust God, especially when things don’t make sense to us.

That’s easy to say and much harder to do.

But if we say we trust God, then we'll show it especially when things don't make sense to us.

## **2. Follow God's Directions**

The second part of that Proverb says to seek God's will.

That means to figure out what God wants us to do and then do it.

How do we know that?

We read the Bible.

That sounds like a dumb answer, but this is a book filled with both God's instructions and stories about people who were trying to follow those instructions.

We can learn from what God said and from those people's journey following Him.

When it says, "He'll show you which path to take," that sounds simpler than it is.

That's not saying that when you are angry, God will show you the best way to get justice or revenge.

God doesn't work like a Maps app, giving you step-by-step instructions on how to live every moment of your day.

However, He does give us a lot of instructions, examples, and advice on how to live in general so that when we have a choice to make, we can take into consideration what we have learned from God and the Bible to be equipped to make the wise choice in that moment.

Remember, this Proverb is telling us what should happen if we are wise.

It's not a promise that we'll always clearly see what to do or even make the right choice.

No one's perfect—well, except Jesus.

And speaking of Jesus, look at the book of Matthew now.

### **Matthew 6:25-34, (New Living Translation)**

*That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear.*

*Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing?*

*Look at the birds.*

*They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them.*

*And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are?*

*Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?*

*And why worry about your clothing?*

*Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow.*

*They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are.*

*And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you.*

*Why do you have so little faith?*

*So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?'*

*These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs.*

*Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.*

*So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.*

In this passage, Jesus is talking.

He is specifically teaching about the emotion of worry.

However, what Jesus says about worrying applies to so many of our emotions.

### **1. You are valuable to God.**

In Jesus' teaching, he points out that God takes care of plants and animals, and yet we are so much more valuable to Him than they are.

We need to trust that He will take care of us.

That starts by reading, listening, and believing the truth that we are loved and valued by God—no matter what emotion we are feeling.

## **2. God knows and wants to meet your needs.**

One of the other big points Jesus makes here is that God knows what you need and He wants to meet your needs.

He knows and understands what you are feeling.

Jesus was God in human form, meaning He experienced so many of the same emotions you and I face.

Don't believe me?

Then, take **The Four-Book Challenge**.

The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are biographies that are all written about Jesus and His life, even though they were written by four different people with four different audiences in mind.

Read through these four books and make a note every time you see Jesus experiencing emotion.

My guess is that you will see joy, sadness, frustration, tiredness, love, happiness, peace, disappointment, amazement, and more!

But don't take my word for it.

Read it yourself.

I know some of you are still stuck on me saying that God wants to meet your needs.

Take a mental step back into when you were a young child.

Or, think about a child in your family now or maybe one you babysit or have helped out with in our church.

So often, as adults or even teens, we try to help the young children out, only to be rejected or pushed away as we are told something like, "No. I can do it myself."

Sometimes, they are right.

Sometimes, they are wrong and not able to do it themselves.

We know we could have helped them and done whatever so much more quickly, and often better, than what they are trying to do on their own.

And sometimes we treat God the same way.

We pray and ask Him to help us.

But, we don't trust Him.

We get all excited and wonder what we should do next.

And we don't take a moment to think about God's instructions that would usually show us what a possible next step should be.

Or we feel lonely or frustrated and wonder when God will make everything better.

We miss the truth that He didn't promise to make everything better.

He promised He would always be with us.

So often, emotions distract us from the truth.

They are like that one little change in the message of the telephone game that makes our final message so different from what we started with at the beginning.

So, remember:

1. Trust God.
2. Follow God's directions.

Why?

1. You are valuable to God.
2. God knows and wants to meet your needs.

As you head to your small group, think about this question:

Do I really trust God no matter how I'm feeling?

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the best and worst parts of playing any form of the telephone game? Explain why.
2. Was drawing the emoji tonight easier or harder than saying a phrase to the next person? Why?
3. So often, we see a stereotypical image of Jesus as being calm and almost with no emotion. Yet in the lesson, we were challenged to read the four books in the Bible about Him and to see all the different emotions He experiences. What emotions can you think of off the top of your head that you know Jesus experienced? Which emotions can't you imagine Him experiencing?
4. If we are going to follow the instruction of Proverbs 3:5-6, it may be the first word, "Trust," that we have the most difficulty obeying. Why is it hard for us to trust God? What does it look like for a junior higher like you to trust God in your everyday life—especially when it comes to your emotions?
5. Have you ever played a game without reading the rules or instructions first? That can be fun, until other people are involved. When we're not all following the same rules, it's hard for the game to go well. Just image one team out on a big grassy field playing by American football rules while the other is playing by international soccer rules. That would be a disaster.

Sometimes we can get so frustrated at God not showing us what to do when all along He has His instructions written down for us in the Bible. We just haven't read enough. Since junior high can be a busy and crazy time, let's share a few different ways we can make time to read our Bible at least four times a week. What ideas do you have on how we can make that happen?

6. For some of us, making time to read the Bible more will radically change our lives because we'll finally hear and learn how God wants us to live as we read His clear instructions, general principles, and see the example in Jesus of how to live this out. But for others of us, we know a lot of His instructions, principles, and even the examples from Jesus and his followers.

We just don't do a great job of doing what we already know we are supposed to do. Let's take a few minutes and be brutally honest with each other. What are one or two things you know God wants you to do that you haven't made a habit of in your life yet? (Or things you need to stop doing and remove as habits that you know He doesn't want you doing.) When someone shares, let's pray for them and even offer suggestions on how to make those changes—if you want to hear that.

7. It almost seems prideful to think that God values us above anything else in the entire world. But that's the truth Jesus is telling us in Matthew 6. When you think about God valuing us so much, how can that help you trust Him and know He will help you through the craziness of junior high emotions? How can that "hack" be better than trying to just make it on your own?
8. God knows what we need. Jesus made that clear. Sometimes the hardest part of talking with someone, especially about our emotions, is that we don't want to shock or disappoint them when we tell them the truth about what we've done or how we are feeling. How does knowing God already knows us that deeply affect your ability to come to Him and ask for His help? Does it make it easier or more difficult for you? Why?
9. Worrying has been explained as thinking a lot about something you don't have any power to change. On the other hand, trusting God is telling the One who has the power to change anything what you'd like to see done or how you need help. If we're honest, the things we worry about don't get better because we worried about them.

We get stressed out and overwhelmed, which does nothing to help the problem. It's easy to say, "trust God," but what does that look like? Besides just thinking a lot about something, what else do you need to change if you are going to stop worrying? What do you need to do to show that you are trusting God?

10. Jesus helped so many people during His lifetime. If we are going to live like Him, we need to know that all these truths about emotions and God are things we need to share with other people.

How can you help others learn what you already know about God? How can you help them process their emotions? Who should you be praying for this week who worries a lot and doesn't realize there is a God who values and loves them and wants to meet their needs?

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