WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING

I've known Jim long enough to watch him navigate successfully through calm waters and more than one raging sea. I have described him to others as a spiritual Navy SEAL. The word "Quit" is not part of his life code vocabulary. He is a genuine picture of what the Bible refers to as a man transformed, described by Paul in Romans 12:1-2. He talks it unashamedly and walks it boldly on a daily basis. He has blessed me and my family with his support, encouragement and unconditional love. What a different world it would be if every man had an authentic friend like Jim Motz.

> *—Mike Schinker, Leader of A-Team Prayer Ministry at Lifegate Omaha*

This book will introduce you to a man I met over thirty-one years ago. I watched Jim go from a college student to managing my insulation crews at 23 years old to entering the car business and ascending the ranks. Whenever I'm at a gathering, and I hear whining about the opportunities in this country, I tell them about Jim. Jim had student loans, nowhere to stay, rented a room for \$50/week, and fell into the darkness of addiction, and through sheer mental tenacity, prayer, and 70-hour work weeks, Jim came out the other side a winner! The lessons and experiences Jim imparts in these pages will absolutely change your life.

> —Mike Collins, CEO of Vixen LLC, podcast co-host, race car driver

I ASKED GOD TO KILL ME

How My Journey from Despair and Addiction Will Help You Optimize Your Life Through Discipline, Consistency, and Faith



JIM MOTZ

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Jim Motz

For Mom and Dad and those who have genuinely loved me, in hopes that I make you proud of the man I have become.

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his work is dichotomic. Since this is my first book, I wanted to throw in a big word at the beginning. Don't get used to it. This book is forged on the cornerstone of Christ, but you'll encounter some "F Bombs" in here. You'll come to see that I am a man with a truly transformed heart, but I am still battling anger, resentment, and uncertainty.

This book is a dichotomy because I am a dichotomy. And, as you'll soon discover as we take this ride together, so are you. This work is unlike any you've picked up before, and that is intentional. My life is intentional. Your life will become intentional as well.

This book represents the culmination of fifty-two-plus years of my life, the fulfillment of a dream, and the beginning of a vision I have had for more than a decade.

As we become acquainted within these pages, you will come to realize what a massive understatement I am making when I say these words: I am not an exceptional man.

Okay, if I'm not exceptional, then what and who am I, and why should you care? I am self-deprecating and arrogant, intelligent, driven, obsessed, funny, charming, quick-witted, manipulative, charismatic, aggressive, selfish, faithful, committed, alert, healthy, fit, anxious, emotional, regimented, disciplined, kind, loyal, and loving. You should care because I am a little bit of everything you are, have been, and will more than likely become all rolled into one dude who has the means, desire, and fortitude to help you achieve a better life, if you're among "The Willing" (capitalized for a reason we will unpack later). This book is unique because I am unique. I live a life of joy but little happiness, intimacy but little love, entertainment but little fun, successes but few victories. My passion is being on the path, reveling in the journey while not really giving much thought to reaching the destination. In other words, I am more of a "stick" chaser than a "carrot" guy. I am a dude who walks my talk, who will stand up to power and even seek out confrontation, who will never bend a knee or kiss the ring, and who will fight for all of us when they come knocking at the door. One more thing: I struggle to accept and understand consequences, so beware!

So, that's who I am and why you should care enough to accept "The Exchange" (also capitalized for a reason) I am offering of your time for the value you'll get from reading or listening to this work and discovering the stories and lessons herein.

Let's go, then! The book is written in what I refer to as "my voice." In other words, if you and I were hanging out having coffee and getting to know each other, this is what you'd hear. Again, intentional. Too many books I've read or listened to seem like the author is elevating himself or herself above the target audience. I don't like being condescended to any more than you do. I won't do it. You'll be hanging out with a person who has been immensely blessed; had some successes; made dumb choices; battled booze and drugs and most every vice known to man; been through heartache, grief, and loss; had his ass beaten on a few occasions; found the true meaning of life through getting to know Jesus Christ; and has an unending passion to help other people get all they desire from their lives. That's me.

This seems like a good time to bring up my formal education. I graduated high school near the middle of my 84-person class with about a 2.1 GPA. I attended college for four years. Three of those years were at a two-year community college. Read that again. My final year was at the University of Iowa. I earned exactly three credit hours that year. Final tally: four years, zero degrees. Good.

Part One of this book describes my past. One word to summarize this section? Trauma. It consists of many distinct and impactful events and stories from my life that are categorized by the year in which they took place. These aren't a day-by-day breakdown, but rather a broad overview of a part of that particular year. These events were chosen because they, in varying ways, helped shape me into the man I am and were integral in forming my world view. Many of these events were painful to recall and put to paper, and my hope is that you can sense my intense emotions and even visualize the tears that hit the keyboard as I worked through this process. Why am I sharing so many stories like these and far fewer victories? Because it's necessary. Because boasting about my wins brings you no value, but being transparent about my struggles and heartaches just might. My life's traumas have made me who I am today, and who I am today is the man you are trusting to help you live an optimized life.

Life is pain. Pain is life. Far too many so-called influencers and self-help gurus are patting themselves on the back while posing for pictures in front of rented super cars and AirBNB beach pads. You will get no lasting nor relatable value from them.

You will sense my pain. I am brutally honest about it. I am an overcomer. You will sense bitterness, resentment, anger, and regret as you read Part One. No apologies for that...it's how I feel, it's who I am, it's freakin' raw and real.

You will notice that 2023 is broken down into more detail: monthly detail. Again, intentional. You'll understand when you get there.

The months of 2023 are in chronological order, but the years in Part One are not. These essays are arranged in the same order in which I wrote them. Why? Because I want you to have as close to the same experience reading these essays as I did while I was writing them.

Some of the names have been changed, but others haven't. These are my best recollections of these events, and I apologize in advance to anyone who knows me and has an issue with exact dates, times, or even specific events. It's my life, and these are my memories—deal with it.

Why do I need to share these events with you? It's because Part Two of the book, the "Your Future" portion, will not have the maximum impact unless we get to know each other a bit prior to me guiding you down the path toward meeting the best version of yourself.

At the end of Part Two is the conclusion to the book called "Before We Part," and I strongly encourage you to set aside some uninterrupted time to focus on this final message as it was specifically designed to put a closing parenthesis on the book while at the same time opening the door to your optimized life.

My journey has been interestingly entertaining. Here are some of the things I have "been" in my fifty-two years: fit, fat, addicted, sober, married, divorced, wealthy, poor, afraid, fearless, strong, weak, timid, courageous, the statue, the bird— Sometimes you get dumped on (the statue), sometimes you do the dumping (the bird).

This is a book for "The Willing." It is for you if you are willing to do what it takes to go from "here" to "there"—whatever those look like in your life. This book poses the implied question "Do you want to get well?" If the answer is "Yes," please continue and get ready to improve...quickly. If the answer is "No," "Not really," "I don't know," or anything other than "Freak yeah!", please continue as well. After all, you have already bought this book, and what's the worst thing that could happen—you may come to the opinion that I'm bullshit and call me out on it? No problem. That's okay with me as long as you call me out on the Ministry of Freedom Show social pages so I can use it as fresh content! After reading this book, you just might walk away with one nugget that could change the trajectory of your life. Take the chance. I won't let you down. I'm solid. I'm for real. I have stood up with courage against those who would demand I make an exchange of my dignity, pride, and honor for their offer of mere comfort and money. I will also stand with and for you.

I left the marketplace after 27 years and started a podcast called "The Ministry of Freedom Show with Jim Motz." (Please like and subscribe on all platforms, as they say.) Why? Because the most rewarding part of my career in the auto industry was impacting the lives of my coworkers and using that impact and influence to help them come alive in the important (strategic) areas of life while at the same time giving them the tools to excel in the more practical tasks (tactical). I was able to do this on an important but smaller scale, and I know God was calling me to increase His Kingdom through the reaching of many who would receive what I have to offer to improve their lives and the lives of their families. Are you still with me? Good. It's time to get better.



PART ONE MY PAST

1987

was a sophomore at MissourI Valley High School. Fat, intimidated by girls, physically weak, bright and entertaining but unconcerned about studies or grades since there was almost zero pressure or accountability on the home front.

I quickly found the remedy for my shortcomings and fears: alcohol. I was the funny kid, sharp-witted and charismatic with just enough leadership qualities to lead a pack of small-town hooligans astray.

One night I remember being angry with the "it" girl of our class. Why? I had a lot of anger that came from believing deep down that I had zero chance of any kind of relationship with the pretty girls. That belief destroys a young man slowly, eating him up from the inside, emasculating him, stripping him of his worth.

The manifestation of my angst that day? Vandalism, what else? I spray painted parts of this girl's car. Keep in mind that this wasn't some crazy amount of damage, but it was certainly out of line and drew the ire of one of our town's tough and moronic bullies, Shane.

I remember being confronted by Shane and his cronies early the next day, a Friday. Shane threw me against a locker and explained that at 3:30, in the parking lot, he was going to restore the rightful order within the school by beating me until I understood that messing with Jennie's car was unacceptable. I'm guessing Shane also thought this might garner him a few points with the young beauty as well. It didn't.

I could've just left school, gotten in my car, and retreated to the temporary safety of home, but I didn't. I sat in 8th period Geometry class and watched the analog clock tick off the seconds until the final bell.

RIIIIINNNNGGGGGG!!! My time was up. I gathered my things at my locker and marched outside to my car, which was surrounded by Shane, his crew of Neanderthals, and what seemed like the entire school.

You know what is coming next from watching all the '80s movies from that teen angst genre, right? I stood up to Shane and knocked him senseless with one perfectly targeted blow to the chin. The bully was defeated, and a new order was created not only at school but within the community and most importantly, inside of this once scared little boy. Victory was mine!

NOPE! This wasn't a movie scene but my pathetic teenage life. I walked up to Shane, and he being a lefty connected with no less than seven unanswered shots to the right side of my mouth, exploding my top lip and exposing the flesh. I fell to the ground in a heap of shame and blood.

I didn't fight back. I was weak. I was afraid. I was a pussy. I was 15 years old, and still to this day I see the raised scar on the right side of my upper lip every time I look in the mirror. That scarred reminder serves me well even today.

I learned a lot that day. Shame hurts way more than a physical beat-down. I will never again bend a knee, take a beating without attempting to give one, and will absolutely live with a reckless abandon that will at least give the appearance of a strong man. But it was all fake, and I would continue to be that same fat kid who took that beating like a fucking coward until I finally faced the man in the mirror some 16 years later.

Fast forward. I don't know what ever became of Shane. I didn't search for him on social media in the hopes of a reconciliation or reconnection so we could reflect on how stupid all of that was. This dude damaged me, and I'm not referring to the physical. Thanks, Shane, because...I am, well, me.

1977

his is my best recollection of my earliest childhood memory. I can't really recall anything before six years old. Is that weird?

My childhood home. Clearwater, Florida. It wasn't apparent to my roughly 6-year-old self why my mom was loading me up in the car to drive to our local KwikPick minimart, but her actions were about to explain.

Mom parked next to the dumpster on the side of the building. From the passenger seat of the car I could see her surprisingly nimbly climbing into the stinking receptacle, and I remember being alarmed when I saw her entire body disappear for what seemed like an hour but was probably more like three or four minutes. I've come to realize that the feeling of time and the actual durations of things change with age.

Mom climbed out of the dumpster, marched back to the car, and was now smelly and visibly shaken as we sped home, she saying barely a word through what I later understood were tears of anger more than sadness.

Dad was home on leave from his duty station in Virginia. Sergeant Motz had been a career soldier since being drafted back in '69 and completing two tours in 'Nam. You see, a couple of days earlier Mom, Dad, and I were at that same gas station and I watched from the backseat as Dad was rooting through his pockets and scrambling to conceal and discard a small piece of paper with a series of numbers written on it. Mom was immediately suspicious because the old man had a bit of a history and problems with the ladies...and after eight years of marriage this was still an issue.

Mom couldn't get that piece of paper out of her mind, couldn't shake the intuition that told her it was important. She had to find it. As it turned out, the paper Mom retrieved that evening at the KwikPick had a phone number and address of Dad's new girlfriend at his mostly-time home at Fort Lee.

Mom left the morning after the dumpster dive and made her way to Virginia while I stayed with my grandparents. Janet Motz had some balls! She tracked my dad to the apartment of the girlfriend who belonged to that phone number, barged in, made a helluva scene, and effectively ended that tryst.

The marriage didn't end. I knew this to be a hiccup. Dad was known for causing a few of those over the years, and this one was mild. Dad medically retired from the Army a couple of years later and we relocated to Harrison County, Iowa, my dad's childhood home.

I was 12 years old when we moved. I didn't yet realize it, but my life was about to go into fast-forward. Within four short years, I would be basically living like an adult and building the foundation of what would become a life of reckless who-givesa-fuckedness that would define the next 15 years of my life. That piece of paper Mom retrieved from the dumpster? To this day, it is kept in a small jewelry box on her dresser. Killer.

2003

was thirty-one years old at the beginning of 2003. Here is my "tale of the tape" (Google it) at that time: 240 pounds, three packs of cigarettes a day, \$800 per week cocaine/ crack habit, 18 beers per day, and cohabiting with T, who would become my wife in the fall of the next year. I had been in the car business since May of 1996 and was running a small dealership. I had arrived.

My high school friend and "brother," Don, was getting married in June and had chosen me to be his best man. Looking back, I realize it was an honor, but I took it for granted like most good things in my life and saw it as another opportunity to party to excess and behave like a total ass in the name of doin' whatever the fuck I wanted.

I was high on cocaine for 36 hours before the ceremony. I honestly can't recall the ceremony itself, but I do remember the reception. I stood up and delivered my speech. It went better than expected, which was on par in my life of little consequence or accountability.

I phoned my crack dealer and made arrangements to meet him at my house in 20 minutes. I left T, Don, and a roomful of friends and family at the reception and sped home without offering anyone the courtesy of telling them I was leaving. I had a habit of leaving people; in fact it became part of my identity. I would leave you at the bar, at the concert, and on one occasion I even left a dude in another state.

The rock of crack cocaine I purchased was the size of a golf ball, and I proceeded to smoke it nonstop. At this point, I had a feeling that I had taken things a step too far. That night might have become my last, and that seemed okay to me.

T eventually made it home along with a few other friends. I continued to smoke, drink, puke, laugh, and tell stories until the crack was gone. Then I lay in bed staring at the ceiling.

My heart was pounding in a way that I had never experienced before, palpitating so hard that my shirt moved with every strained beat. I had never been so sick. I wanted to die. I remember wanting my life to be over but not wanting to kill myself. That is a strange dichotomy I would experience in other seasons of my life as well. I yelled aloud to the ceiling (where I believed God to be) "KILL ME!!! KILL ME or take away this obsession to drink, drug, hurt, and be hurt. I cannot continue another moment on earth as this man!" I was hoping for death... but I got life. I was able to sleep after being awake for roughly 72 hours.

That day was June 16, 2003. I have never had another drink or used any drugs since then. God answered my prayer. I wasn't sure if it was the answer I wanted, because dying still sounded like a much easier option. As it turned out, I was right.

My cold turkey detox started right away, as I had to be at work the next morning. I endured diarrhea, vomiting, and such profuse sweating that I would wring the perspiration from my T-shirt each morning, which meant T changed our bedding every day for about a month.

T stood by my side through all of this ugliness and all that I had put her through since I'd hired her to work for me some four years earlier. I will be forever grateful to her for standing by my side and not giving up on me.

I missed zero hours of work during this process. No treatment, no meds other than some Tylenol PM to help me get a few hours of uninterrupted rest each night. No relapses, no excuses. It sucked. Good.

1988

econd semester of my junior year of high school. I was drinking heavily on the weekends, not eating much, and managing to lose the fat that had kept me full of anxiety, fear, and inadequacy. I became skinny fat as a 16-year-old—yeah, I turned 16 in November of my junior year, the youngest in my class. My life revolved around barely getting by in school despite having a "gifted level" IQ, listening to '80s hair metal music (or as I still refer to it, music), hanging out with my friends and finding someone who would buy us wine coolers and purple passion two-liters, and deciding which gravel road to hang out on while we would binge drink and talk about life.

Things at home were seemingly good between Mom and Dad. There was an occasional rift when Mom felt that Dad was spending a few too many hours at one of the local bars, but nothing that would raise any red flags. Dad took off for his annual two-week cross-country motorcycle trip with his gang of 40-something veterans in April. The events of that month would end up being formative, damaging, important, and tragic.

Driving home from school that particular afternoon was uneventful, but walking from the garage into the house was anything but normal. I noticed that our newer car, a 1987 Chrysler LeBaron, was filled with what looked like suitcases and random household items. I walked in and saw my mom standing in the kitchen with tears in her eyes, shocked that I was home. Turns out, she was about two minutes from bolting and had planned on not having to see the son she was choosing to abandon and leave home alone. She gave me a story about needing more from life, how Dad was messing with other women, how I was almost grown and didn't need her anymore, how she was driving to California to live with her quadriplegic friend, Rick, for whom she had cared after his life-altering car accident when they were both teens.

I was angry but calm as I matter-of-factly told her to unload the nice car and transfer her stuff into our 1978 Chevy Caprice Classic—Myrtle, as she was called. Mom fought through her tears, whimpered, and got the job done. We didn't speak as I supervised the operation from afar. I stood outside on that brisk spring day and watched as Myrtle's taillights faded into the distance. There I stood, in the driveway, abandoned by my mother while Dad was on his trip with no way for me to reach him. I was stunned. I was pissed. I was, and still am, damaged. But you know what else I was that late afternoon? Free.

Dad called a couple of days later and asked how we were. Of course I lied. What was I gonna tell him? I figured we would have plenty of time for that chat when he came home a few short days later.

I was sitting in the living room the day he rode up the driveway. My heart raced as I heard the roar of his Yamaha Venture throttling up the gravel driveway. Dad walked in and said, "Hey, Bud, where's Mom?"

The next words out of my mouth are ones I will never forget. I had rehearsed them for a few days because I wanted this sentence to not merely inform, but also to wound.

"She left you, dude," I announced.

"What?" Dad asked.

"She left you, dude," I slowly repeated.

We sat and talked about our immediate futures and what life would look like until I graduated in 13 short months. Mere weeks after that conversation, Dad essentially moved in with his girlfriend from work.

I was a 16-year-old, alcoholic, girl-obsessed punk with Dad's checkbook for spending money, a super-nice home in the country with a pool table, satellite dish for TV, a '72 Chevelle to drive, and an "I don't give a fuck" attitude that would serve me well during this season of my life.

Christmastime was interesting and would be the first of many dysfunctional and depressing holiday seasons I would endure. Dad put up a tree and even came back home for several days. Christmas Eve for me meant drinking, scouting chicks, smoking pot, and being me.

I made my way home about noon on Christmas Day to find Dad waiting for me. The plan had been to open presents and spend some father-son time together early that morning, as this was our first Christmas without Mom around. I had blown it. This meant a lot to Dad, and it should've meant a lot to me. It just didn't. Remember, broken.

I can still hear Dad speaking the only words he said to me that Christmas: "Merry Christmas, have fun opening your fuckin' presents." Then he left, and I didn't see nor speak to him for a couple of weeks. I grabbed a beer from the fridge and sat on the floor unwrapping the handful of gifts he had gotten me. It would be the first of many holidays I would spend alone. Oh, well.

Mom and I had a rough relationship for a few years after she left. As time went by we more than reconciled, and today I cherish her as my mom but more importantly as the most kind-hearted person I have ever known.

But there was one question I never asked her: "Why?" Life is pain. Pain is life.