



Life Hacks.

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Glenn Garvin

BIG IDEA – Paul’s Life-Hack is dependency & strength in Christ, Not circumstances.

Scripture Focus – Philippians 4:10–13 How I praise the Lord that you are concerned about me again. I know you have always been concerned for me, but you didn’t have the chance to help me. **Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have.** I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned **the secret of living** in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.

DIGITAL NOTES!

LIFE HACKS

There’s no doubt about it—we’re all hunting for the best “life hacks” to squeeze every drop of joy out of the life we lead.

A life hack is simply a trick to make everyday living more productive and efficient. **Thanks to social media and well-meaning friends, we’re flooded with them.** Whole websites and influencers make extravagant promises about how you too can “hack” your life.

But did you know the apostle Paul said he discovered his own ultimate life hack? **He even called it the “secret” to life.**

Want to know what it is?

First let’s talk about our own modern day life hacks.

What is one of your favorite life-hacks?

I am fascinated by them. I enjoy hearing other’s life-hacks as well as discovering them on social media.

Some work. Some don’t and some are just outright scams and lies!

And they vary too.

Some are:
cooking or meal prep hacks,
cleaning or organizing chaos hacks.
Business or office hacks.

Some are about parenting or relationship.
So many of them are cool hobby hacks.

And some of them are even “Christian” hacks about how to read or memorize Bible verses or artfully share our faith!

The top life-hack guy, **Armen Adamjan**, has 9.7 million follows on Instagram – [Creative Explained!](#)

Teens now average around 8.5 hours a day of multitasked electronic media phone + TV + games, etc. [looking for connection and answers!] – Dr. Carolyn Leaf, [Milkshake Multitasking](#).

Even though I crave for **Life-Hacks**, it turns out **they are not as productive, and definitely not as healthy** as I would have believed!

In **Dr. Carolyn Leaf's** recent “**Myth of Productivity**” work, Leaf summarizes the neuroscience this way:

- Hustle culture tells you **more hours = more value**.
- But the brain is **not built for constant productivity**; it is built for: **Rhythm** (work + rest cycles) **and Recovery** (mental and emotional decompression), **not constant output**.
- **Thoughtful flow** (deep focus on **one meaningful thing at a time**).

The speed of social media has eroded our capacity and art of deep thinking!

And...our social diet disciplines our social deeds!

Deep thinking isn't completely dead, but it is malnourished!



DIG DEEPER: Productivity Hacking effects.

Why are we talking about the Apostle Paul learning the secret to living life, especially in this final look at our series on Great Gratefulness?

Summary:

1. **Grateful for Grace** - Remembering our benefits keeps the soul satisfied

2. **Gratefulness as a Weapon** – Gratitude guards our heart, releases power in the battle, and keeps us in God's will.
3. **Avoiding More** - Everything I want without God makes me less; everything I want in God makes me whole.
4. **Overflowing Thanks** - A simple THANKS frees our heart, frames our attitude and allows for gratitude to flourish in community.
5. **Life Hacks** - A life-hack to living our best life.

Paul knew God, loved God.

He knew his calling, loved Christ's Church and figured out a Biblical principle – a secret to living his best life.

And, it's perfect that he chose to write these Holy Spirit inspired ideas down in a letter to the churches in Philippi.



DIG DEEPER: What were the churches in Philippi like?

Philippi was a proud, Roman, veteran colony with a tiny Jewish presence and a mostly Gentile, generous, suffering church. Paul writes from prison to say: “Thank you. Stay unified. Stay humble. Stand firm under pressure. Watch out for distortions of the gospel. And remember—your real citizenship is in heaven, not Rome.” Philippians is not a “crisis letter” like Galatians or 1 Corinthians. It’s warm and joyful, but it’s not issue-free.

But let’s look specifically at what Paul shared with the people in the church about how he **discovered doing life well**.

How I praise the Lord that you are concerned about me again. I know you have always been concerned for me, but you didn't have the chance to help me. **Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have.** I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned **the secret of living** in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.
Philippians 4:10-13 NLT.

Paul thanks the church for their concern for his welfare. He basically tells them; there was not much they could have done anyways.

Then Paul briefly lets the church in on his little life hack secret.

It is here that we get a peek into an ancient leader of the Church, who was the primary reason the gospel spread quickly into the Roman/Greek/Gentile cultures. **Through Paul’s calling, God planted and strengthened a whole network of churches across the eastern Mediterranean—Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, Ephesus, the Galatian churches, Colossae, and many more. The exact count isn’t**

given, but the impact is obvious: an entire region full of living churches that didn't exist before this one man obeyed his calling.

The Apostle Paul was the author of 13 epistles, which is almost 50% of the New Testament books, and 62% of the letters written!

As an Apostle of Jesus, Paul leaves profound mark not just on the early church, but also on us.

Concern for Paul

4:10 –

How I praise the Lord that you are concerned about me again. I know you have always been concerned for me, but you didn't have the chance to help me.

What was Paul referring to... before? The New Living Translation says “concerned about me again.”

Right after **he first planted the church in Philippi** (Acts 16), Paul left for Macedonia and ministered in places like Thessalonica (Acts 17) and beyond. During that time, **the Philippian church repeatedly sent financial help and likely supplies**. He told them “**not one church stepped up to help him except for you!**” – Paul loved this generous church made up of the Philippian people.

Philippians 4:15 NLT

As you know, you Philippians were the only ones who gave me financial help when I first brought you the Good News and then traveled on from Macedonia. No other church did this.

4:11 -

I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

Paul is not thanking, nor explaining because he's in prison or even has current need of **more** – he genuinely wants the church to know something he has learned in his own calling, his own circumstances, even his own suffering!

4:12 -

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

Paul begins to talk about this secret, this mystery and how he figured it out.

- He had lived low and he lived high!
- He had lived with a full stomach and an empty one.
- He had lived with lots of resources and with few.

This is the context of understanding Paul's past and what gives him the humble confidence – not only where was currently (in Prison), but also how he would make it in the future!

Paul uses these super cool words in Greek expressing this mystery, this secret. [Mueó](#), [perisseuó](#), [chortazó](#), [peinaó](#), [hustereó](#).

Paul figured out to live above and below all the normal wants and needs of life.

What was Paul's life-hack?

THE SECRET: Dependency & strength in Christ, not circumstances.

4:13 -

For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.

This verse is one of the most misquoted for misuse verses in the Bible.

Whether it's good times or bad. Plenty or poor. This verse is true whether it's quoted in Haiti or Hollywood, Nepal or New York.

- It is not a genie verse saying, "I can achieve anything I want."
- It is a Biblical truth and promise to all believers, "I can endure and obey in any circumstance because Christ strengthens me."

The core of the secret

Contentment is in Christ-sufficiency:

- Jesus' presence is enough in prison or in freedom.
- Jesus' provision is sufficient with an empty stomach or a full one.
- Jesus' strength is enough in suffering or success.

Conclusion:

The true "**life hack**" isn't a **hack-trick** at all; **it's a person - JESUS.**

It's not getting control of our life but **yielding our life and control** to Christ.

APPLICATION

- **Name your situation: Am I in a season of need or plenty? What is it exposing in me?**
- **Reject the false hacks: Where am I believing, "If I just had X, I'd be okay"?**

- Practice the secret daily with a simple prayer:
- “Jesus, be my strength and my enough today—whether I have a lot or a little.”

Jesus, let me see you in both plenty and poverty. Let my dependency and strength be sufficient in you.

SCRIPTURES

Philippians 4:10–13 NLT

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Philippians 4:13 NLT

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DIG DEEPER NOTES



Productivity Hacks

You have to understand that this is not an external force crashing on you. It's life that you don't know how to live in, because it's changed so much. And because we've got productivity hacks that make us even less productive, that are supposed to make us more productive. – [Dr. Caroline Leaf](#)

Dr. Caroline Leaf's take on productivity hacks.

1. Multitasking and “milkshake thinking” damage focus and mood

In her article on “milkshake multitasking,” Leaf cites research showing:

Media multitasking among American young people has increased by about 120% in ten years.

Teens now average around 8.5 hours a day of multitasked electronic media (phone + TV + games, etc.).

Longitudinal data (Archives of General Psychiatry) links this kind of multitasked media exposure in adolescence with higher depression and anxiety in young adulthood, especially in men.

She summarizes the neuroscience like this:

1. The brain does not truly multitask; it rapidly switches between tasks, which:

- reduces the depth of attention,
- increases distraction and emotional volatility,
- and lowers the quality and completion rate of work.

In other words, going faster by doing more at once actually makes us less productive and less emotionally stable.

2. Shallow, rapid input vs. deep, slow thinking

Skimming lots of bits of information (“milkshake multitasking”)

With Deep, sustained thinking on one thing at a time.

She notes that deep, focused thought:

- Positively activates the prefrontal cortex (the brain's “executive” center),
- Improves connections within and between key neural networks,
- Leads to better concentration, less distraction, more emotional stability, and higher-quality task completion.

So, neurologically, slow, focused work builds a stronger brain; fast, fragmented work weakens the systems you need to think clearly.

3. Her own clinical research: slowing down helps damaged brains work better

In her clinical work with:

Patients with traumatic brain injury,
Students and adults with learning and emotional disabilities, Leaf reports that when she dropped traditional “push harder” approaches and instead trained patients in her 5-Step “Switch On Your Brain” / Neurocycle process (slow, deliberate, repeated reflection over weeks), she saw:

Rapid improvements in focus, concentration and understanding,

- Greater efficiency and quality of work,
- Ongoing gains in self-motivation and self-esteem,
- Continued cognitive and emotional improvement over time (not short bursts).
- The key is structured, repeated, deep thinking over ~63 days, not quick hacks. Her broader work on neuroplasticity argues that sustained, deliberate mind-management is what actually rewires the brain for better performance, not frantic speed.

4. “Hurry sickness,” toxic schedules, and health

In her piece on the “Hurry Sickness Epidemic,” she argues that our “toxic schedules” and constant urgency put us in chronic toxic stress, which:

- Keeps the body in a stress state (fight/flight),
- Contributes to digestive issues, obesity, and even malnutrition (because we default to fast, low-quality food),
- Is tied to significant physical and mental problems.

She points to studies showing:

- In toddlers, every additional hour of TV between ages 1–3 is associated with about a 10% increase in attention and impulse-control problems later in childhood.

Later research links more screen time to delays in language and motor development.

Her point: a chronically sped-up lifestyle literally degrades attention, self-control, and health—the exact capacities you need for sustainable productivity.

5. The “Myth of Productivity”: the brain is built for rhythm, not constant output.

In her recent “Myth of Productivity” work, Leaf summarizes the neuroscience this way:

- Hustle culture tells you more hours = more value.
- But the brain is not built for constant productivity; it is built for:
- Rhythm (work + rest cycles),
- Recovery (mental and emotional decompression),

- Thoughtful flow (deep focus on one meaningful thing at a time).

She argues that:

Pushing through exhaustion and stacking hack on hack rewires your brain toward burnout—chronic high stress, brain fog, and emotional instability.

Sustainable effectiveness comes from mind management: pacing your effort, protecting recovery time, confronting toxic stress, and building habits over weeks (not days).

Fast, hacked, multitasked living:

- Fragments attention,
- Increases anxiety and depression risk,
- Lowers self-control,
- Damages physical health,
- And ultimately reduces real productivity.

Slow, rhythmic, deeply focused living:

- Strengthens the prefrontal cortex and neural networks,
- Improves mood and resilience,
- Builds healthier habits over time,
- And leads to better work, better health, and better long-term output.

So in Leaf's framework, "faster" is often fake productivity: it looks impressive on the surface, but the neuroscience and clinical outcomes say it leaves you dumber, sicker, and more burned out.

Every 63 seconds we are able to stand back and observe our own thinking. We are able to catch a spiral before it becomes an ingrained network inside of our mind and body network, so we can train ourselves literally to capture thoughts and renew our mind. This is the science.

Within the minute framework. That is because of the way that the nonconscious and subconscious, the nonconscious and the conscious mind work at 400 billion actions per second, down to a million. What if it's a whole lot of different levels of speed? It's kind of like, if you watch a cartoon when a cartoon is drawn, when we watch a cartoon on like an animation, it's not one. It's for these **40 images for every one**, every few seconds or something thinks every 10s is 40 images. It's the same thing for every time we focus on like a concept. **Like now as I'm talking, you are focusing on words and concepts. But behind that, for every word or concept you're focusing on there are 40. Little bits of information in your stream of consciousness.**

Now consciously be not aware of that. **What we are consciously aware of is every more or less, every 60s we focus in on a concept** so and that builds. So, every 10s we're focusing on little concepts, and then a meaning drops in where we can actually start directing and choosing more or less every 60s so it goes in layers. It's literally from the millions to every few seconds up to the minute. The way we can constructively stand back and observe and actually say, you know, okay, I don't like how I'm functioning or this is really upsetting me.

Do I want this to upset me? Do I want to? Why am I people pleasing again? Or why am I feeling under this pressure? Why have I reacted like this? We can do that more or less every 60s and that's what that's where this comes to.

I can get this irritation under control now. I'm feeling better. I'm standing back, observing. I don't need to need to let that person irritate me. I don't need to take on this next task. Why have I just taken this on? I'm people pleasing again. I'm actually. And you can start working through the process of analyzing and making decisions, and you can do that quite effectively within a **one-minute moment**. Takes a little bit of practice. And obviously you want to practice this.

Let's say that you speak to someone in a really irritated tone and you recognize it causes and inflates that fight, and now suddenly you're feeling pressure from that argument. And so now you make a bad decision because you're in an argumentative mode and you're all your physiology psychology. You stuck in the conscious toddler mind, and now you accept another task, and now you don't have time for that task, and now you're sitting freaked out. Nonintrusive thought pops up and says, oh no, you know, you're useless. You think you can do all of this or whatever, and you have this, are you?

Dr. Caroline Leaf's "one-minute" check-in (the awareness step of her Neurocycle) uses these four questions:

1. What am I feeling?
2. Where am I feeling this in my body?
3. What are my behaviors right now (what am I doing or about to do)?
4. What's my perspective at this moment (how am I viewing this situation/day)?

That 60-second scan is meant to catch your emotional/physical/behavioral state before it runs you, so you can choose how to respond next.

Minute Moment

The first step of this formula is to gather awareness of those four signals as four sentences. Very calming, very nonjudgmental, very compassionate. You stand back and you observe that puts you into. So that process of getting those full sentences for answering those four questions put you into that metacognitive state, the monetary in that stage, you've activated the parent part of your mind.

1. How am I feeling in this body? What are my emotions?

2. What is my emotional warning signal? Where am I feeling this emotional warning signal in my body?
3. How is this affecting how I'm about to speak or what I'm about to say and do?
4. How is this affecting my perspective, my attitude, my mindset in this moment.



How does the content we consume shape our ability to be content?

1. Content trains our comparison reflex

Most modern content (especially social media) is:

- Curated (only the best moments),
- Filtered (only the best angles),
- Edited (only the best outcomes).

Result:

We start measuring normal life against everyone else's highlight reel. Our ordinary starts to feel "less than," even if it's actually blessed.

Comparison + constant exposure = chronic discontent.

Contentment dies when "what I have" is constantly set against "what they have."

2. Content rewires our expectations of "normal"

If the constant diet is:

- Luxury and convenience,
- Instant results,
- Big wins, glow-ups, and overnight transformations,

Then:

- Slow, hidden faithfulness feels pointless.
- Ordinary obedience feels boring.
- Suffering and waiting feel like something is wrong, not something God uses.
- Our expectations of life move from "faithful and fruitful" to "easy and impressive."

Contentment cannot survive when normal life always feels like a letdown.

3. Content stirs up endless desire

Advertising and influencer culture are built on one premise: “You are not okay as you are, and you do not have enough as you are.”

So content:

- Creates problems you didn't know you had.
- Sells you solutions you didn't know you “needed.”
- Keeps you in a low-grade state of “almost happy, but not quite.”
- Desire gets constantly poked and prodded.

Contentment requires “enough”; content constantly whispers “almost.”

4. Content hijacks our attention (and attention shapes affection)

Where your attention goes, your affection follows.

High-stimulus, fast-paced content:

- Trains your brain to need constant novelty.
- Makes stillness feel intolerable.
- Makes reflection, prayer, and real conversation feel “slow” and “unproductive.”

If you can't sit still, you won't be able to be content. Contentment grows in unhurried presence; most content trains us for restlessness.

5. Content amplifies outrage and anxiety

A lot of content is optimized for:

- Outrage (because angry people click and share),
- Fear (because anxious people stay tuned),
- Division (because conflict drives engagement).

Over time:

- The world feels more dangerous than it is.
- People feel more divided than they actually are.
- Your baseline emotional state shifts from trust to threat detection.

It's hard to be content when your nervous system is living on high alert.

6. Content shapes what we think “success” looks like

The dominant storylines we see:

- “Success” = visibility, virality, money, youth, beauty, and platform.
- “Worth” = how many people notice, like, follow, or applaud.

That story collides with:

- Quiet faithfulness,
- Hidden obedience,
- Loving a small circle of people well,
- Staying in hard places out of conviction.

Contentment depends on redefining success around God's "well done," not the internet's applause.

If we swallow the world's picture of success, we will feel like failures even when we're being deeply faithful.



Our social diet disciplines our social deeds!

1. It sets our "normal"

If your daily feed is: sarcasm, takedowns, tribal outrage, then that tone becomes "normal." So your deeds shift toward:

- mocking instead of listening
- winning instead of understanding
- posting about people instead of talking to them
- What we marinate in becomes how we move.

2. It redraws who counts as "us" and "them"

Social diet: Echo chambers tell us who the "good guys" and "bad guys" are. Algorithms feed us more of what our group already thinks.

Social deeds:

- We excuse cruelty toward "them."
- We only serve, help, or defend people who think like "us."
- We stop seeing individuals and only see labels.
- Dehumanizing content produces dehumanizing behavior.

3. It trains our empathy or our apathy.

If your social diet is mostly: highlight reels, memes, hot takes, and quick jokes, you get used to people as content, not as souls.

Result:

- Suffering becomes "something to react to," not a call to act.
- We scroll past pain we would have stopped for in person.

- Empathy shrinks; apathy grows. And apathetic hearts don't move in costly love.

4. It shapes our conflict style

Social diet: Online fights **reward speed**, certainty, and **sharp comebacks**.

Social deeds:

- We interrupt more, listen less.
- We argue to win, not to reconcile.
- We bring comment-section energy into real relationships.
- You start treating every disagreement like a thread to dominate, not a person to understand.

5. It directs where we actually show up

What fills your attention will pull your action. If your diet is all online activism, but no real relationships, you'll feel "engaged" while doing almost nothing tangible. **If your diet highlights local needs, shared meals, and real faces, you'll be more likely to volunteer, give, invite, and show up.**

Our social inputs choose our social outlets.

6. It either fuels courage or keeps you performative

A diet of shallow approval (likes, hearts, applause) trains you to only do what plays well. **A diet of wise, honest, godly voices** can strengthen you to do the right thing even when it's unpopular.

Performative spaces create performative deeds. Deep, truthful spaces create courageous deeds.

7. Content can also feed contentment (if we choose it intentionally)

It's not all negative. The right content can:

Lift our eyes from ourselves to God.

Remind us of truth instead of feeding lies.

Normalize sacrifice, simplicity, and gratitude.

Testify that God is good in ordinary, non-spectacular lives.

The problem is not "content" in general; it's an unfiltered, unexamined content diet.



What was the church in Philippi like?

1. What was Philippi like?

Roman military colony in Macedonia.

Philippi was a “leading city” of Macedonia and a Roman colonia (Acts 16:12). It functioned as a mini-Rome: Roman law, Roman citizenship privileges, Latin inscriptions, imperial festivals, and tax breaks for colonists. [The Church of Christ in Zion, Illinois Bible Hub](#)

Full of veterans and their families.

Augustus settled retired soldiers there after the Battle of Philippi (42 BC), so the city had a strong patriotic, pro-Rome, pro-Caesar identity. [Enduring Word](#), [Navigating An Ancient Faith](#)

Economically strategic.

It sat on the Via Egnatia, the major east-west Roman road, and near former gold mines, making it a commercial hub.

Religious climate.

Pagan gods, imperial cult, and typical Greco-Roman religion. Christianity arrives here as a tiny minority faith in a very Roman, very loyal, very pluralistic city.

2. How did the church start, and what were the people like?

Acts 16 gives the founding story:

No synagogue; small Jewish presence.

Paul normally starts in a synagogue, but in Philippi he has to go outside the city to a riverside “place of prayer” with a group of women (no synagogue means fewer than ten Jewish men in town by rabbinic standard).

Founding members:

Lydia – a wealthy dealer in purple cloth from Thyatira, a “worshiper of God” (likely a Gentile God-fearer attached to Judaism). She and her household are baptized and her home becomes the ministry base.

Slave girl – delivered from a spirit of divination; her owners' loss of profit triggers the riot and imprisonment. (Acts 16:16–24)

Philippian jailer – a Roman official (almost certainly Gentile), who, along with his household, believes and is baptized after the earthquake.

From the letter itself we can sketch the character of this church:

Deeply attached to Paul.

They're his "joy and crown" (Phil 4:1), one of his strongest supporting churches; they repeatedly sent financial help and even dispatched Epaphroditus to care for him in prison.

Marked by generosity, partnership, and affection, but not problem-free:

They face opposition and suffering (1:28–30).

There are tensions and rivalry, including the public conflict between Euodia and Syntyche, two female co-workers in the gospel (4:2–3).

3. What was the mix of Jews and Gentiles?

Evidence points to a predominantly Gentile church:

Lack of synagogue and the need to meet by the river = very few Jewish men in Philippi.

Key converts are a Gentile God-fearing businesswoman from Asia (Lydia) and a Roman jailer with his household.

There were likely:

A small number of Jews and God-fearers (e.g., the women at the prayer place),

But the bulk of the congregation came from Greek and Roman backgrounds, including some with strong Roman-citizenship identity. Paul plays on this with language like "conduct yourselves as citizens worthy of the gospel" (1:27) and "our citizenship is in heaven" (3:20), which hits hard in a Roman colony proud of its status.

So: mixed, but heavily Gentile, with strong female leadership/influence from the start.

4. What main concern is Paul addressing while in prison?

Philippians is not a "crisis letter" like Galatians or 1 Corinthians. It's warm and joyful, but it's not issue-free. From the letter, Paul's main burdens are:

Thanking them and strengthening them as partners in the gospel.

He writes as a prisoner (most likely in Rome) to:

Thank them for their financial support and Epaphroditus's ministry (4:10–20).

Reassure them that his imprisonment is actually advancing the gospel (1:12–18).

Calling them to unity and humility inside the church.

He urges them to “stand firm in one spirit, with one mind” (1:27), be “of the same mind, having the same love” (2:1–4), and then gives the Christ-hymn (2:5–11) as the model of self-emptying humility.

He addresses the Euodia/Syntyche conflict by name, asking them to agree in the Lord (4:2–3), which shows how central unity is to his concern.

Steadying them under pressure and persecution.

He interprets their suffering as a gracious gift (“it has been granted to you...to suffer for his sake,” 1:29) and calls them to rejoice and shine as lights in a crooked generation (2:14–16).

Warning against false teaching on both sides.

He warns against Judaizing legalists (“dogs,” “mutilators of the flesh,” 3:2–11) and against law-free, pleasure-driven opponents whose “god is their belly” and whose minds are set on earthly things (3:18–19).