

Passion, Purpose, and Primate Poop by Taylor Cressler

I thought about just making my speech a stand-up routine, so...airline food...pause for uproarious laughter. No. I love performing and entertaining. It's my passion. If somebody came up to me and said, "I can make it so you can do the one thing you want to do most for the rest of your life," I'd say, "I will burn you at the stake! WITCH!" But once I've simmered down, act, make people laugh, make people feel, tell stories.

For instance: the first time I went skiing, I was on my church youth group's annual trip to Colorado, I had to take a lesson the first day there, then I was let loose to terrorize the mountain. By the second day, I was already notorious. I was about this size, and wore a huge, puffy, bright orange coat, so I was conspicuous. Now, I'm no Chris Stock, so I was taught to stop flying down the slope by using the pizza wedge method. Point your skis like this. Way too heavy for that. Quickly learning that that was simply not going to work, I developed my own technique, which was to turn sideways and lay my skis down like a motorcycle. The second day, my "friend" takes me down a slope I've been on, but takes a "wrong turn," and we approach a Black Diamond area. So my friend slaloms down this, not too tall, 80-degree slope onto the flat area not far below. Cool. I'll do the same thing. I go right. Turn. Turn. Turn. I go left. This is taking forever. It isn't that far down. You know what, I'll stop when I get there. So I turn my skis straight and just go for it. I fly down the slope, reach flat land. Jump, turn sideways, land. My skis stop. I do not. I am floating parallel to the ground for what feels like a minute and a half, then my chin makes contact, and upon later examination, I had flown about 6 feet, and dragged, chin-first about another 6. When I finally regain the will to peel my body off the ground, I look back. My skis are gone, and my ski poles are both sticking straight out of the ground with my gloves still in a death grip around them. Suddenly, from out in the distance, the mountain medic comes, he sees me, and says, "Oh, it's you," bursts out laughing and continues on his way.

That's my passion. Stories like that. Just telling stories. However, I have way too many tales like that to not realize that there has to be a reason I haven't died of mine or my friends' stupidity. And if that same witchy person I talked about earlier came to me and asked what is the purpose of my life of close-calls. I would say, it is because of the love Jesus Christ has for me...bet y'all weren't expecting that. So get out of here witch, I don't need your magic. And now, if you will all be patient with me as I launch into the half-hour sermon portion of my speech. Kidding! But, people get away with calling Christianity a religion, and labeling it as a bunch of rules, but it hinges on the love shown through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. I'd love to talk to you about it. So, we have my passion. Entertaining, acting, story telling. We have my purpose, using my passion with the thankfulness of a gift and using my entertainment to tell people about the most important thing in my life, see the aforementioned Jesus Christ. But my title promised passion, purpose, and primate poop. So, I leave you with my favorite story, which was also the intro to my common app essay.

5th grade. Zoo field trip. My mom gave me a camera, and all the animals were doing something awesome. Roaring lion. Snap. Howling wolf. Snap. I had fallen behind my class, and I round the corner to see all my friends laughing at the chimp exhibit where its occupant was leaping around on his giant rock, screeching. Too good even for a picture. I start laughing too. Then I see him reach down, grab a handful of his own feces, wind up like a pitcher at the mound, and launch it. In slow motion, I see this bundle fly through the air, through the fence, and right into my gaping, laughing mouth.