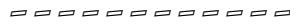


What Am I Doing Wrong?

Why the girls at your church just want to be friends with you.



By Jim Graham

I *ntroduction*

Let me start out by saying that what you are about to read will probably shock you. Most people reject this information when they first encounter it. They doubt the validity of it. They think it must be wrong or that it can't possibly be true. It's almost like they are angry at the very idea. But then, as time passes and they think more about it, they start observing the world differently and seeing things they've never noticed before. The thought that what they read might actually have a certain amount of truth to it starts bouncing around their head. After continuing trying to gain girls' affections the way they always have, continuing to get the same results, and noticing similarities in guys they see being successful with girls to the information they read, they start to rethink some things. Maybe, just maybe, the reason they've had so much trouble is because they *were* thinking about things completely wrong. Maybe the information seemed so far out and crazy *because* they were so far away from the truth themselves.

It is then that a paradigm shift begins to occur. This is necessary. It all starts with the foundation. You must completely change the whole way you think about girls and dating. Consider the possibility that most everything you've ever been taught probably doesn't really apply. Consider the possibility that your interpretation of reality could be completely wrong. Clean house and start over from scratch. Once the old foundation has been stripped clean, the new foundation can be laid. And once the new foundation is in place, things will start to take care of themselves, and you will continue to learn new things and grow.

If you are reading this, I imagine you can relate to the following scenario: A guy likes a girl. He starts getting close to the girl, and they become friends. He falls in love with the girl, but she just doesn't "feel that way" about him and isn't attracted to him "in that way." She tells him exactly what she is looking for in a guy. He knows that he fits perfectly what she *says* she is looking for, so he wonders why on earth she doesn't like him as "more than a friend." She continues to date guys who aren't anywhere close to what she deserves and don't fit most, if any, of any of the qualifications she says she wants. She complains to him about these guys, and he plays the part of the supportive friend but is secretly dying inside and thinking to himself, "Of course he treats you like that. You deserve so much better! Why are you dating him? You should be dating me! I won't treat you like that. I'm perfect for you!"

Sound familiar? I bet it does! There is a reason for this, and you are about to learn it.

- Who am I? -

You are probably wondering who I am and how I know what I know. Well, I must admit – Jim Graham is not my real name. I'm concealing my real identity because it would be very easy for some of the things in this book to be taken out of context and my career could be ruined by those looking to do just that. Like I said, this information requires a major paradigm shift and thus to really understand it you must read it in its entirety and in its proper context. Otherwise, it could easily be misunderstood.

While I can't tell you my name, I can tell you that I've accomplished a significant amount in my relatively young life. I can't give any specifics without giving away my identity, but my accomplishments are in many different fields. The secret to all of them is the same. How did I accomplish all that? By simply breaking it down and developing an in-depth understanding of what was going on. It's a process I call "inverse learning".

Again, I don't say all this to brag but to show you how incredibly embarrassing it was for me to be so completely inept and ignorant when it came to dating. I didn't learn anything on the subject from my family or even my friends, and what I saw on TV and the movies really messed me up and sent me in the wrong direction. For most of my life, I actually thought I knew about girls. The thought that I could be completely wrong seemed so ridiculous to me that I never for a second considered it a possibility. Sad, isn't it?

But, as I grew older and went through high school and then college, things began to change. Through observation, experience, advice, and the same analytical processes that allowed me to succeed in other areas of my life, I gradually began to learn and understand more about girls. The puzzle pieces *very* slowly started coming into place. However, there was still a large chunk of the puzzle missing. That large chunk, I knew, was the backbone of the entire concept – without it, nothing made any sense. The things I had learned were so confusing that I was dumbfounded,

but I knew I was so close! I knew that if I could find the missing piece that tied everything together – the foundation that connected everything – my life would completely change.

In the meantime, unfortunately, I was losing terribly when it came to dating. I had looks, confidence, accomplishments, and, most importantly, spiritual maturity and a close relationship with Jesus Christ. Yet I was still so embarrassingly failing that it became a real source of hurt for me. I knew I would be a great husband because I spent my entire life trying to become the perfect husband for my future wife, because that's what I think she deserves. Unlike dating, relationships *did* come naturally to me. So, I was just flabbergasted that I couldn't get a girl to be interested in me if my life depended on it – and it sure felt like it did! Meanwhile, guys who had none of the things I had to offer were getting dates from the most impressive of women. None of the advice I got from others seemed to make any difference, and most of it I was already doing anyway. Much of the advice was good, but it was just a very small piece of the puzzle – without the right foundation, it doesn't do much good.

The last couple of years I was in college, I was in love with a very close friend of mine. She was perfect for me, and I just knew God had it written in his plan that we were to be together. I left nothing on the field, as athletes like to say. She was it! If it wasn't her, it was nobody because I knew I would never find another girl as perfect as her. So, I gave it my all. I did everything I knew to do to the fullest extent of my abilities. We became incredibly close. I was always there for her, and I did the most special and meaningful things I could possibly do to show her just how much she meant to me. I fought for her, I impatiently waited out her relationships, I wrote and recorded a song for her . . . I did *everything*! When things seemed impossible I scratched and clawed in desperation, trying to hold onto any chance I had with her.

I learned a lot from the experience – not because I did anything right, but because I did everything wrong. I could have put on a clinic for preventing attraction. She knew how I felt because I was open with her about everything, but she just never felt “that way” about me. Eventually it got so bad that it ruined our friendship, and I was devastated. It took being at rock bottom to realize what I had done to her. I had tried as hard as I possibly could, and I failed as horribly as I could possibly fail. While trying to make her happy and treat her like the princess she actually was, I had deeply hurt her – something that was almost impossible for me to comprehend. I initially blamed her for being so hurt, as I thought someone was lying to her or manipulating her. I just couldn't believe or understand how she could feel that way. It just couldn't be true! But it was.

I had created an impossible situation for her. What I was doing was both turning off her attraction instinct, which prevented her from having any kind of romantic feelings for me, and at the same time making her feel indebted to me. It was emotional blackmail! She knew how I felt about her (girls almost always do), but she always experienced horrible guilt for not being able to reciprocate my feelings. She couldn't possibly repay me the way I needed to be repaid for the things I did for her. And even though I never consciously put any pressure on her, it was there, and it was strong. And at the time of this writing I've had maybe 10 words of conversation with her since.

It's difficult for us guys to understand that the way we've been taught to treat and respect girls actually hurts them. Many of the guys we see interacting with girls in ways that make us angry or

that seem to violate them are actually respecting them. It is *we* who are being disrespectful*. Sound ridiculous? Of course it does! Girls seem so confusing in our society because everything we think we know about them is wrong. My goal is to attempt to explain it in a way that allows you to *understand* it. Just telling you what to do and what not to do is useless unless you can really understand *why* it's that way. When you can understand girls and what is going on during the dating "game," then you can start the process of that foundational change I was talking about. It is then that you will look back and realize why you've failed at dating in the past, why others around you are succeeding or failing, why girls are acting the way that they do toward you and, sadly, how you may have hurt the girls you have loved.

- The AHA! Moment -

I had looked everywhere for the information that I would eventually learn and that would have prevented so much heartbreak in my life, but it simply was not available. You can go to a Christian bookstore and not go two steps without running into a book on dating or relationships. However, none of those teach what we really need and want to know – probably because the authors themselves don't know! I'm hoping to get this information out there and into the hands of people like me who desperately need to know it. And hopefully they won't have to make the same mistakes I made.

Like I said, right after I lost this girl as a friend, I was upset with her. I was in disbelief. But my thought process was wrong, and I blamed everyone except myself. Once I got that out of my system, I was finally able to have an objective view of myself and the situation. Only then could I accept the fact that I needed to completely change my way of thinking. Still, until I had that elusive missing piece of the puzzle, there was no new foundation to lay.

Oddly enough, it was during a lecture on evolutionary psychology (stick with me here) that I found what I was looking for. Suddenly, everything connected and made sense. My life literally changed. Almost everything about me changed. Finally, the puzzle was complete! I went back and apologized to the girl whose friendship I had lost, but it was too late. Nothing I said was able to mend that relationship. But, I had learned a valuable lesson, and I know that God doesn't make mistakes. He was able to make great things happen in me because of that failed relationship, and I was able to grow in ways I never could have if I had never met her.

So, now you're probably curious about that missing piece I finally found. As I mentioned, the "Aha! Moment" came during a lecture on evolutionary psychology. The simple use of the word "evolution" probably perked a few ears... or, I guess, raised a few eyebrows?

* How, you ask? Patience, my friend. All will be completely explained later on. I promise, all your questions will be answered by the end of this book!

There are many different views on evolution in Christian circles. You may completely disagree with the theory of evolution, or you may believe God used evolution to create the world. You may believe the creation story is literal, or you may believe that it is a metaphor for evolution itself. Regardless of what you believe, it doesn't conflict with the validity of what I learned.

No one really disputes the fact that evolution exists on *some* scale. Natural selection is real, and we know that there is some evolution within species. For instance, we know all breeds of dogs had a common ancestor and the process of natural and sexual selection eventually led to many different breeds. It's when people say that evolution occurred from one species to another that heated debates arise. It's no secret that we humans have changed over time. Look at the difference between Jews and Arabs, whose ancestors were brothers (Isaac and Ishmael)! The important point is that, early on, humans lived in tribes and God designed us to work in that kind of society. That's the basis of the missing piece.

Shortly after this discovery, my dating life completely changed. I would love to say I was very mature about how I handled it, but the truth is that I wasn't. My behavior was more like a kid who's never had candy before locked up in a candy store. I was dating models and was having the success with girls I had always dreamed about. Everything made *sense*! I knew exactly what I was doing, and I continued to grow and learn exponentially. Now, I'm not particularly proud of this certain time in my life, as I was not looking for someone God wanted me to be with but instead was making up for lost time, so-to-speak, going after the kinds of girls society said were "out of my league." Eventually, I got that out of my system and got back on track spiritually. However, when I tried using what I had learned on the stronger Christian girls, I was surprised to find that it didn't work as well. Christian girls are very complicated, and I eventually found out why! They are, without a doubt, the hardest girls to date. Even the greatest "players" would fail.

The information I had learned was, and is, very dangerous! To be honest, I didn't want anyone else to know it. In the wrong hands, I knew just how dangerous it would be – and, in the right hands, I knew how much of a temptation it would present. Girls have no idea how vulnerable they are and how easily they can be manipulated – even the ones who think they are "too smart" to be in danger. Guys are logical, but girls act on emotion and intuition. Females were given a strong instinct which, in specific areas of their lives, has a significant amount of control over them. So much so that, if a guy can tap into it, they would have a control over the woman that no one should have.

The information I learned feeds on narcissism and makes it exponentially worse. It's a dangerous cycle. Power is dangerous, and power over people is the most dangerous of all. As Christian males, the temptation to sexually have gorgeous women at our whim is not something we need! Thankfully, God protected me several times when I really didn't deserve His protection, so I never did anything really stupid. I am eternally grateful for that.

Consequently, I had to really analyze and pray about this knowledge from a Christian perspective. I took out all the manipulative parts of it that I knew were wrong, and I tried to look

at the rest from God's point of view. He created us like this, and He put these instincts and social dynamics in us for a reason. Seeking a new perspective, I went out and actually talked to many Christian females and got some interesting insights. One thing I asked them was what things guys did on dates that they didn't like. Some of the answers shocked me – not because I was surprised at what they didn't like, but because I couldn't believe guys actually did those things! There was one thing in particular that stood out, but I'll get into that later.

Finally, I took into account all the information I had gathered and tried to see the larger picture. I asked myself, "How was this dating system designed to work?" It's kind of like if you were given all the individual pieces to a mouse trap and you had to figure out how all the pieces were supposed to fit together to make the original design. And how does all this fit with scripture?

Right now there seems to be two extremes: those who are clueless about women and those who understand them but use manipulation to abuse the system God created. Just how many people know this dangerous information? Well, most of the guys who utilize it don't know it intellectually but instead understand it naturally, almost like an instinct. Those guys cannot even begin to explain it to those who don't innately understand it. When they try to explain it, they end up giving little specific nuggets of information that are mostly true but, by themselves, lead to more confusion than anything else. The few that truly do know and intellectually understand the concept usually want to keep the information to themselves because it gives them power. Or possibly, they are like me and understand how dangerous it is and don't want anyone to know it. As a result, there aren't many people following the "middle road" that seems to fit more of God's original design. And girls are the ones suffering for it.

1

The Importance Of Dating

It's important that you know what I mean by "dating." People use the term in several different ways, and a misunderstanding of my definition could lead to a lot of confusion.

When I say "dating," I'm referring to what takes place before a romantic relationship is established. In other words, dating is the process leading up to what used to be called "going steady" – from the moment you first meet a girl up to the (hopefully) mutual decision to only see each other. Some people may say that "dating" continues all the way through the relationship up until you get engaged, others believe the dating process never stops even throughout marriage, and many believe you aren't officially "dating" until you start a romantic relationship.

It's all semantics, and I don't want to get caught up in that. Just know that this book is primarily about the process of going from being strangers to being in a committed romantic relationship. I refer to this process as "dating." What happens in a committed relationship and what happens during the process leading up to that point are two totally different things. In many ways, they are opposites. Once you get into a relationship, everything changes drastically. "Getting girls" has been a mystery to most guys because we've been assuming that the process leading up to a committed relationship was no different than the relationship itself. Once you see it as a completely different process, you can start to understand women in a way not previously possible.

I'm assuming that, if you struggle with the "dating" part, you will most likely be a natural at making a *relationship* work. Very often that seems to be the case. If you *do* feel you need help once you're in a committed relationship, just read one of the thousands of self-help books available at any book store. I'm not that interested in getting into what happens after dating, as there is most definitely no shortage of material on the subject. But, if it's the "dating" part you need help with, you are pretty much "up a creek without a paddle!" Well... unless you read this book, that is, which you are obviously doing right now.

To my knowledge, you won't find the information in this book anywhere else. If it's out there, I never found it growing up. And, *believe me*, I looked!

- Becoming a Real Man -

My hope is that this priceless information gets into the hands of Christian guys all over the country and that we start acting like the men God intended us to be. Girls will definitely appreciate it, and we'll notice a change in the way dating works. If this happens, we'll see fewer girls settling for jerks or moving to the secular community to find guys who provide what she is subconsciously seeking. This book is only the beginning. It will help you establish a foundation, but there is more to learn that no book can teach. You just have to go out there and find it for yourselves! With the foundation in place, you will be able to learn and grow exponentially. The world will open up and make much more sense to you. What is impossible to explain in text, you will be able to learn by observation of others and from your successes and failures.

Yes, you will fail, and that's okay. You have permission to fail! Dating is all about failing and succeeding, and the successes will probably shock you. And, even your failures, if you learn from them, become successes! These are very fun lessons to learn, and you will realize how important dating really is. It prepares us. As you progress, you will experience something very difficult to describe. You will start to open up and discover a part of yourself deep inside that you had no idea was there. You will *change*!

Trying to explain this change to someone who hasn't gone through it is impossible. To them it sounds like you are becoming someone that you are not. This isn't true. As you go through it, you will understand that *this* is how God *designed* you to be. It's as if you are shedding off the insecurities and immaturity that have been closing off the "real you" your entire life. It's an *awakening*! You are a caterpillar that will blossom into a beautiful butterfly, and you'll finally understand how you have been *inhibiting* this part of yourself the whole time. God has given us instincts and desires that depend upon this awakening for fulfillment – so it is vital that we experience this.

Most guys never go through this change, and you can see how it affects every relationship they have throughout their entire adult life – especially marriage. Those God-given instincts and

desires are still very strong in these men, but they didn't go through the necessary transformation to become the men they were designed to be. Instead, they attempt to fulfill their desires and instincts in other ways. This is very sad to see and leads to a lot of dysfunction, especially in the family, and it is often patterned onto their sons, who may develop insecurities and inhibitions themselves. Since they haven't been taught the correct way to interact with or date girls, it becomes a cycle.

See how important dating is? It's crucial! Sadly, however, there is a current train of thought among many Christians that dating is, in fact, bad. Several books have even been written on the subject, including one in which the author actually instructs young Christian males to "kiss dating goodbye." This is *incredibly scary!* I understand the author's line of thinking, as I had come to a similar conclusion myself in high school (based on the limited information I had). But, it's simply not reasonable. Just because the author only sees people abusing the dating process and because it's personally been a source of hurt for him doesn't mean dating is bad or that it should be avoided. It just means that our culture has warped what dating *should* be!

Don't take the advice of a guy who is so confused about dating that he gave up. The key is not to give up, but instead to learn how it is supposed to work!

- Asking a professional -

I had a good talk about this very topic with a friend of mine who is the head of the counseling department at a respected Christian university. It is a subject she is very passionate about. When I first brought up the afore-mentioned book, she became noticeably agitated. She told me that she wanted to have a giant book-burning to get rid of every copy! After I started writing this book, I asked if I could get her input on the subject and she agreed. I had a great conversation and took detailed notes. Below is a paraphrase of what she told me:

- **The idea that you shouldn't date is very dangerous and, in many ways, quite ignorant.** (She has done a lot of Christian pre-marital counseling and has seen the problems firsthand.) Dating is an incredibly important part of the maturing process, as well as a critical step in finding your future spouse.
- **To put it simply, *dating changes us!*** We become very different people after years of dating. If we don't date, we don't go through the changes that are so incredibly important for us.
- **We grow up and form preconceived notions about what "works for us" in terms of a romantic relationship.** Very often, we try to either replicate the family dynamics that worked for us growing up or learn from their mistakes and attempt to "fix" what was wrong and/or missing. Dating is an important process of discovering which of these

notions is incorrect and what needs to change.

- **How can we learn what really “works for us” unless we try them out and experience new things?** The more we date, the more our needs, wants, and desires change. If we don’t date enough, we will not be adequately equipped to choose a spouse. What we want when we first start dating is sometimes the exact opposite of what we want later on. Getting married *before* learning this often leads to disaster!
- **Dating helps us become more self-aware.** Romantic relationships show us things about ourselves that we wouldn’t otherwise learn.
- **Dating is a growing-up process.** There’s a maturity that occurs as a result of dating that we don’t get from platonic relationships. The more we date, the more we mature in our ability to handle relationships.
- **The intensity of a dating relationship causes a unique refining process because it is much more intimate than a platonic one.** Issues come up in romantic relationships that will never come up in a platonic one. Just like in chemistry, there are some chemical changes that can’t happen in certain materials without setting them on fire. The same is true of us. Without the strong, intimate, fire-like penetration of a romantic relationship, the necessary changes just can’t happen.
- **If we commit to marry someone without dating first, we lose the important evaluation process.** What if things come up that we don’t want?
- **If we are determined to marry without dating, we cannot be honest with ourselves or each other.** There’s pressure to make it work even if it turns out we *aren’t* a good romantic match. That pressure makes it very difficult to admit there might be a problem. We prevent ourselves from learning how to be honest with each other and how to work through the problems.
- **The dating process teaches us how to evaluate our relationships.** Without it, we can’t spot potential issues, hidden problems, personality conflicts, or character flaws in the other person. We are all masters of hiding our problems from the closest of friends, and we’re even better at hiding them from ourselves. So, sometimes we honestly don’t know there *is* a problem! Because of that, we can’t rely on the other person to tell us their faults, regardless of how honest they are. Some things we just have to find out ourselves.
- **Without dating, we cannot prepare for the drastic shift that occurs when going from single life to marriage.** Actually, there are two major shifts that happen in a relationship: The shift from platonic to romantic and the shift from dating to marriage. The latter is every bit as much of a shift as the former, and probably more so! That shift is difficult enough to prepare for anyway, but without first going through the platonic/romantic shift

(which can only happen by going through the dating process) it is practically impossible!

- **How can we know if we are ready for a relationship if we don't go through one?** Or even more importantly, how can we learn that we *aren't* ready for a relationship? Almost everyone *thinks* they are ready, but many, if not most, aren't!
- **By dating different girls, we experience different points of view, different kinds of relationships, different personalities, different ways of doing things, and so on.** This allows us to learn things we would never learn otherwise.
- **The dating process is a form of practice.** It's where we make our mistakes and learn from them. It's where we try things and find out what works and what doesn't. We learn what ruins relationships – and no man wants to learn those things with his wife, trust me! We aren't perfect, so we have to *learn* how to be successful in a relationship. The only way to really discover this is by making mistakes.

- Back to my thoughts -

I think my friend makes some really great points! You wouldn't buy a car without first going on a test drive, would you? * And, if you did go on a test drive, how would you know what to compare it to if it's the only car you've ever driven? Perhaps more importantly, how would you even know *how* to drive a car if you've never driven one? What if the first car you wreck is the one you bought for life?

When I was a freshman in college I was engaged to a wonderful girl named Laura. She was everything I was looking for, and we knew everything about each other – even our deepest darkest secrets. She was perfect for me. But, God kept us from being able to get married, and it was the hardest thing I've ever had to go through. It took me two-and-a-half years just to get over her. But, even though it was a horrible experience, I'm so glad it happened!

Through years of dating, I've gained a lot of maturity and learned a lot of things. What I need now and what I needed then are vastly different. Laura might have been perfect for me then, but she is definitely *not* perfect for me now! If we had gotten married, we would both be missing out on the kind of relationship God has in mind for us.

Believe me, we can make mistakes in our judgment of God's will. It's incredibly easy to misread what God is telling us when our emotions are involved, especially romantic ones! If we don't go through the dating process, God can't show us what He really wants. And, yeah, that's kind of important!

* It has since come to my attention that the "test driving a car" analogy has been used a lot in reference to sleeping with a person before marrying them. Obviously, this was not my intention at all as I fully believe premarital sex to be against God's will. Sex is much more than just a physical act, it's a spiritual one. God is what makes it good, not technique.

2

The Most Important Part!

Too many times when we get into an intellectual discussion, or when we try to figure things out, we seem to leave God out. For some reason, God and prayer become a last resort – like it won't really make a difference. I saw a television show not too long ago which had one of the main characters, a kid, asking a monk if there was anything they could do to help solve their dilemma. The monk responded that they could pray. The kid then asked if there was anything *useful* that they could do. The monk said no.

I thought that was both *very* funny and *very* insightful. I'm sure they were making an anti-religious statement, but it very accurately portrayed what most people, including Christians, believe. We may say that prayer is powerful and act like it is something very important, but when it comes to our actions we treat it like a last resort.

"Well, we've tried everything we could think of. All we can do is pray."

All we can do is pray? Prayer is not a last ditch effort. It's not a 'hail mary' at the end of a football game. It's not a sign of total desperation. Prayer is the most powerful thing we can do!

What we tend to forget so often is that **prayer should be the first course of action.** It's way more important and effective than all the other things we will try. Maybe we don't feel as though our prayers are actually reaching God? We know God is all-powerful and that there will never be a problem we encounter that God can't handle with ease. We know that prayer is our way of communicating to Him. And we know that if we ask He will answer. Therefore, we should know that prayer is the most powerful thing we can do. But, we don't. So, at least one of those things we must either be forgetting or we don't really believe deep down inside.

I'm reminded of the illustration with the pastor and science teacher. The teacher tied a rope to a bowling ball (somehow... don't ask!) and hung it down off the ceiling to make a giant pendulum. He told the pastor about the laws of physics and how it doesn't matter how far back you pull the bowling ball, when you let it go it can never return farther back than where it started from. The pastor asked the science teacher if he believed in this law, which of course he did. To test it, the pastor pulled the bowling ball all the way back until it barely touched the science teacher's nose and then released it. The ball swung forward and then back again. As it approached his face the science teacher lunged backwards in self-defense. Did he really believe that law? If he did, why did he move? He thought he believed it, but when push came to shove he showed that he didn't.

Such is the case with prayer and our trust in God. **We say we believe, but when it comes down to it what do our actions reveal?** Let me ask you this. Do you believe that God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and completely trustworthy? Do you *really* believe it? Will you still believe it when a bowling ball comes swinging towards your face or will you lunge backwards? **When faced with a challenge, is God the first person you go to? Or do you rely on yourself first and only use God as a last resort?**

- First Things First -

My fear is that this chapter will come across as nothing more than an obligation. I don't want it to seem like I just threw this in because I had to meet some kind of spiritual quota. Too often we use God and prayer almost as a routine. **Please don't skim this chapter as something I just had to say was the most important part to look spiritual.** I'm not just saying that, it really is by far the most important. Without this, the rest of the book is worthless. And as much as I may have to say about dating, none of it compares to what God knows and can show you. I believe God has shown me the knowledge I am sharing with you in this book and I believe He wants me to use it to help others. But, that's just a small piece of the puzzle. There is much more God desires to show you, do for you, and do *in* you. **He has a plan for you – God says so in scripture. So the quicker you get on that plan, the better!**

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." – Jeremiah 29:11

1. Do you believe in God?

I'm assuming there's no one reading this who wouldn't say yes to this question. Maybe a better question to ask is "Do you think it is enough just to believe in God?" John 3:16 says that whosoever believes in Jesus will not perish, but instead be given eternal life. However, it's important to understand the word in the original language which has been translated as "believe". In John 3:16, this word actually means belief unto action. In other words, it means whoever believes in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior so strongly that they follow Him and put His teachings into action will be given eternal life.

To put it harshly: **So, you believe in God? Big deal! Even the demons believe in God! ...and they shudder!**

You may think I'm being pretty pointed in saying that. But, you know what? That didn't come from me. It came from scripture!

"You believe that there is one God. Good. Even the demons believe that - and shudder." - James 2:19

Yup, James can be pretty blunt! **It is not enough just to believe in God. We must have a relationship with Him.** Every day we need to be growing closer to Him because **if we aren't growing closer, we're growing further apart.** There's no standing still! If there is a break in our relationship with God, if we failed to obey Him, we must confess to God and ask His forgiveness.

We must repent. I don't think most people know what that actually means. **Repent means a 180 degree turn. It means to stop doing what we are doing and turn back the other direction and start walking toward Jesus.** In other words, we can't continue doing what we're doing and just keep asking for forgiveness. We must *stop* our disobedience and *start* obeying Him. Go, and sin no more!

Jesus declared. "Go now, and leave your life of sin." - John 8:11

2. Are you a lukewarm Christian?

The Bible is very clear about the dangers of being a "lukewarm Christian". In other words, it is better to not be a Christian at all than to just be a passive Christian. It's better to be hot or cold than to be lukewarm.

So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. - Revelation 3:16

Really think about what that's saying! Being a half-in, casual Christian is *worse* than not being a Christian at all! Either be an all-in, sold out for God, fully committed to a strong relationship with God, growing closer every day Christian or stop being a Christian. Sell out or get out!

Read Luke 13:22-30. What you read may scare you. At least it should!

To paraphrase, someone asked Jesus...

"Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?"

Now, what do you think His response was? Do you think Jesus said no, that many people are going to be saved? Well, he didn't. In fact, He said the door is narrow and many will try and enter it but won't be able to! They will be left outside knocking and God will say...

"I don't know you".

They will respond by saying that...

"We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets".

But He will reply again...

"I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers."

Ouch! Jesus says something very similar to that in Matthew 7:13-14.

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

Wow. Only a few will find it. Now, according to a census taken on the CIA website 80% of Americans profess to be Christians. And did you know that Christianity is now the fastest growing religion and the second largest in the world? Does this sound like a "few" to you? What that says to me is that **the majority of people who profess to be Christians will not be making it.** They will be left outside the door with God saying *"I don't know you or where you came from"* to which they will reply *"But we ate and drank with you!"* But He will send them away.

No longer can we look around and compare ourselves to other Christians. Just because every other Christian we know is doing something or isn't doing something, that doesn't mean it is okay. In fact, if you see yourself being no different than the majority of Christians you might have cause to worry!

Incredibly scary stuff, isn't it? So, we should ask ourselves, are we in the minority or the majority? Are we one of the few who are totally sold out and have close relationships with God? Or are we in the majority who are just casually Christian?

3. Do you have a relationship with God?

Unlike other religions, Christianity is about having a relationship with God. In other belief systems you aren't allowed any kind of relationship with their god or gods. But Jesus died so that we could have a relationship with Him. Nothing else matters. Nothing. It doesn't matter how much money we have given. It doesn't matter what rules we've followed. It doesn't matter how many good things we have done. If we don't have an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, none of it makes any difference.

Do we talk to Jesus? Do we listen to Him? We are Jesus' bride, He is our bridegroom. Do we have a casual relationship with Jesus or a marriage? Is Jesus our acquaintance or our lover? If we had the same kind of relationship with our spouse that we have with Jesus what would happen? What if we only talked to our spouse one day a week? Or even only once a day? What if we never spent time with her?

Commit to start growing closer with Jesus. Talk to Him. Spend time with Him. Show your love to Him! Do this daily. Remember, He is with you all the time. It is so hard to do, but try and remember throughout the day that Jesus is with you hanging on every word you say and every move you make. He is enamored with you. He can't get enough of you! Remember that girl you were in love with? How you could just stare at her for hours? How you wanted to know everything about her? How you wanted to spend every waking minute with her? How obsessed you were with her? *That* is how Jesus is with you!

Listening is also very important. Spending quiet time where we can just listen to Him is vital. However, I must warn that I have heard testimonies of people who have been contacted by spirits claiming to be God that weren't. They were deceived! When you spend your quiet time, pray specifically to the "One true God" and ask Him to speak to you and not allow anyone else to. It sounds a bit crazy, but I promise if you don't, you open yourself up to being spoken to by anyone who wishes to speak to you.

I'm aware of the growing trend called "contemplative prayer" where you are sometimes instructed to concentrate on a scripture verse and repeat it over and over like a mantra. I would advise against this very strongly. That comes from Eastern mysticism and could be very dangerous regardless of whether or not you are using scripture. Plus, you can't listen if you are talking. Focus on God!

4. Are you 100% committed to His will?

This is so important! It isn't enough to just be a baby Christian. We have to get to the point where we are 100% committed to God and His will for our life. I say 100% because we have to give Him everything! Is there anything God could ask you to give up that you wouldn't be able to? Make a list of all the things you can think of that you wouldn't be able to give up. That list is what is standing between you and a fully committed relationship with Jesus Christ.

What if Jesus asked you to give away all your possessions to the poor? This is what He asked the rich young ruler! Would you be able to do that? I know of a very talented basketball player who Jesus asked to give up basketball. It was the hardest thing in the world for him to give up, and that's exactly why He asked him. There was nothing wrong with basketball, but was he more committed to basketball than to Jesus? I'm happy to tell you that he did give it up. He didn't know why he was being asked to give it up, but he trusted the Lord so much that he followed Him and did it anyway. Later Jesus gave it back to him and he became a very successful basketball player.

Abraham was asked to give up the most important thing to him – his son Isaac. He didn't understand why God would ask that of him, but he trusted God so much that he followed His instruction. Of course, God stopped him from killing Isaac at the last minute. God just needed to know that Abraham was more committed to Him than to his son.

Now, does he always give it back to us? No. Most of the time we are asked to give it up because God has something better for us or because what we are being asked to give up is getting in the way of His plan.

Is there anything God could ask you to do that you couldn't do? What if he asked you to become a missionary to Africa? What if He asked you to take a job offer that you hated? What if He asked you to move? Do you trust Him enough that you know you would be happier doing whatever He told you to do?

God has a perfect plan for us and it is important that we get to the point where we can honestly say to Him...

"Everything I have is Yours, Lord! I'm through holding back. I trust you completely and know that Your plan for my life is perfect and much better than mine. Whatever you ask of me, Lord, I will do it. Whatever you ask me to give up, I will give up. Whatever you ask me to do, I will do. Whatever your will is for my life, that is what I want!"

When you can honestly pray that prayer and mean it, your life will change more than you can imagine! Are you stuck in a rut? Do you feel yourself on a spiritual plateau? Are you like Paul when he said that he knows what he should do but he doesn't do it, knows what he shouldn't do but does it anyway? Do you find yourself having trouble doing the right thing, having to constantly ask forgiveness for the same things over and over? If so, then this is the answer!

God has a perfect will for our lives and we need to surrender to it. Give Him a blank check and say that you are giving up your will for your life in exchange for His. Sign the bottom of a blank contract which God can fill with whatever He wants. It's one of the hardest things you'll ever do, but by far the most important (other than salvation of course)!

When I realized I needed to do this, I decided to just start praying the prayer even though I knew I couldn't 100% mean it yet. What I discovered was that every time I prayed the words, I meant

them a little bit more. After praying this prayer countless number of times, daily, and asking God to help me be able to mean it, I finally got to the point where I could honestly mean it! At that point my life changed drastically. It became easier to do the right thing, I felt closer to God, and I could feel Him working in and through me! People around me could even tell a big difference. My life has never been the same!

5. Do you read the bible?

You'd think this one would be a no-brainer, but it's not. Few Christians actually spend time reading the bible! **If your wife gave you a letter, wouldn't you read it? God gave us His Holy Word, shouldn't we read it?**

I know how hard it is, trust me! I've tried to do devotions for many, many years and never could follow through with it for more than a week or two. Finally, I figured out what I could do every day without burning out. I read just a paragraph – one complete thought. But, I really ponder the words and not only try to really understand them, but also see how it applies to me, what lessons I could learn from it, and what it *means*! I then pray about it, asking Him to help me in that specific area. **Before I read the bible, I always pray that God would speak to me through what I am about to read.**

You won't believe some of the things you will discover through reading His Word! **There are a lot of things in there that people like to skip over or pretend isn't there. There are many things you will never hear preached over. Please don't skip this step! Reading His word allows God to speak to us. And we are held accountable for what is written in there. Never having read it is not an excuse.** I had to make myself commit to NEVER missing a day! I knew that missing just one would lead to missing more and eventually stopping. You *can't* just miss one! Trust me. You can't!

I also read the commentary at the bottom of my study bible over the verses I have just read. The bible I have is NIV which is the translation most often recommended. Contrary to popular belief, **NIV is much more accurate than the King James Version.** The KJV is actually the least accurate translation because it was translated so long ago and we actually have older manuscripts of the bible now than they did in King James' era. So the NIV is actually translated from an older copy than the KJV!

The most accurate translations of all are the NASB, NRSV, and ESV which are what many scholars use. They are formal translations, and because of that they are difficult to read. The grammar and sentence structure can make it awkward. The NIV uses a direct translation but changes the grammar and sentence structure to reflect English. So, it's easier to read but it shouldn't change the meaning at all. What is commonly recommended is that you **use the NIV as your personal bible, but have an NASB to use as a reference when looking things up when questions arise.**

I would strongly recommend staying away from loose translations like The Message and the Living Bible. These are opinions and not really translations. They can be fun to read and very interesting as an additional devotional. But they are not meant to be used for actual bible study.

I would also recommend starting with the New Testament, as it is most relevant to Christianity. The Old Testament is important, but for other reasons. When it comes to devotions I would make sure you make it through the New Testament first before venturing into the Old Testament.

- “So What?” -

If you cannot answer yes to all of these questions (well, except #2 which should be a no), then you are not ready for the rest of this book. Until then, you are not the kind of spiritual leader that these girls deserve. **You must commit to God first before you can commit to a girl.**

God must always come first. **Develop a strong relationship with Him and become His bride and when you are ready, God will give the right girl to you.** Until then, you are not ready!

When I was in middle school I gave God complete control over my dating life. I knew He had someone special for me, and I didn't want to do anything to ruin His plan! I didn't want to get his second or third choice because I had ruined the first two by following my will instead of His. So **I sacrificed my dating life to Him. Whatever He wanted me to do He had permission to do it. Whoever He wanted me to date I would date, whoever He didn't want me to date I wouldn't. He had complete control!**

I even set an ongoing fast to show my dedication to that sacrifice. I gave up carbonated drinks, and to this date I have kept that fast. It is a reminder to me of that commitment. Because of this, I have seen God take a very active role in my dating life. That hasn't always meant fun and good times, though, as sometimes it meant God saying no. Actually, **most of the time it meant God saying no. He has protected me from many girls' affections and that was a source of much pain, but I now appreciate it.**

I would strongly advise you do the same. **Give up control over your dating life. Let's be honest, we have no idea what we're doing! God knows exactly what He's doing and He knows the perfect girl for you. Why not let Him take the reins?**

See? I told you this was the most important part! Please don't just read this chapter through once. Read it over many times and really let it soak in. You will be glad you did, I promise.

Next up: Chapter 3 – “What I Learned”

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