

WHAT WOMEN WISH
YOU KNEW ABOUT

DATING



*A Single Guy's Guide to
Romantic Relationships*

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CONTENTS

Introduction 9

Part 1: Becoming a Man

1. “Never Tell Me the Odds!” 19
2. Guys versus Men 26
3. Living before Dating 34
4. Why Do You Want a Girlfriend? 46
5. Being a Man with Women 56

Part 2: Dating Like a Man

6. The Top Five Myths of Christian Dating 69
7. Where to Start? 78
8. Talking to Her and Asking Her Out 95
9. The Casual First Date 111
10. When Things Don’t Work Out 122
11. The Active Second Date 131
12. Navigating the “Friend Zone” and Seeing Other People 139
13. The Romantic Third Date 147

CONTENTS

Part 3: A Man in Love

- 14. You Have a Girlfriend—Now What? 167
- 15. Physical Intimacy 176
- 16. Deeper Wounds That Need Healing 191
- 17. “You’re So Lucky I’m Around . . .” 201

Notes 205

INTRODUCTION

Love, having become a god, becomes a demon.

—C. S. Lewis

If love is the answer, could you rephrase the question?

—Lily Tomlin

A humiliating experience makes a good story later. It becomes a funny yarn to spin at parties or an amusing anecdote for public speaking. But that's later. While it's happening, you pretty much want the world to end. I had such an experience about fifteen years ago. It's funny now . . . then, not so much.

It happened during my first year of graduate school. I was two thousand miles from home and didn't know a soul. I hadn't had a girlfriend in a few years, and every attempt at dating had been fruitless at best, disastrous at worst. Two years earlier, while working as a youth pastor at church back East, I had developed a crush on a woman at the church. Let's call her Jenny. After a few ham-handed attempts to

get to know Jenny, I found out that she had a boyfriend. So I did what I always did when faced with unrequited love: I became her friend. Our phone calls and “friend dates” fueled a fantasy of Jenny coming to her senses, breaking up with her boyfriend, and falling head over heels for me. It never happened, and when I left the church, I was convinced that I’d never see her again.

A few weeks after arriving at grad school in Southern California, I got a phone call. I thought it was my mother, since she was usually the only person who called me. But it wasn’t a call from Mom. It was the kind of phone call lonely guys dream about, like something out of a teen drama on television. When I heard the voice on the other end, my head went light and my pulse skyrocketed. It was Jenny.

She’d tracked me down through her mom. She’d moved to Northern California and her parents now lived in Southern California, an hour away from me. She was coming down to visit them over the weekend and wanted to know if I was free for church and lunch afterward. After hesitating in order to give the impression that I had a busy social calendar, I told her I was available and would see her Sunday morning.

I had another shot with Jenny! I wouldn’t be lonely anymore. Life would be complete. There was the troublesome fact that she was still dating the same guy from back East, but I took her calling me as a sign that their relationship would soon end. Jenny had said nothing about him coming along. Of course, she hadn’t said he *wasn’t* coming, either.

I arrived at the church before Jenny and her parents. I slid into a pew and waited, trying to look cool and indifferent despite the acrobatics of my internal organs. I caught movement out of the corner of my eye and turned to see Jenny’s mother. She smiled and gave me a hug. Her father came

next and put a firm hand in mine. Then Jenny materialized behind them . . . with her boyfriend.

I was so taken aback that I didn't even say hi. I managed a wan smile, and the pastor saved me with the call to worship. I wanted to crawl under the pew and die. I'd gotten out of bed at dawn and driven forty miles to spend time with Jenny and the same guy she'd picked over me when we all lived on the other side of the continent. I felt like a moron.

But wait, it gets better.

After the service Jenny's mother insisted that we all go to the Sunday school class Jenny's father was teaching. That seemed harmless enough until we arrived. I sat down next to Jenny with her boyfriend sitting on her other side. I looked around and noticed something odd: I was the only one in the room without a member of the opposite sex on my hip. This was a *couples'* class! I felt like one of those forlorn socks without a match that turned up so often in my laundry. I started praying for the building to catch fire.

But wait, it gets better.

After Jenny's father pontificated mercilessly about the importance of keeping romance alive in marriage, he asked everyone to stand and join hands for the closing prayer. Jenny grabbed my hand, which was enough of a minor thrill to feel like a consolation prize. But then I made the mistake of opening my eyes and looking around the room. Not everyone was holding hands—only the couples. The lone exception was me, Jenny's boyfriend, and Jenny. We were a triple in a room full of couples. At that point, I started saying my own prayer.

Lord, if it doesn't affect your eternal plan for the universe too much, could the second coming happen right now? Or just make me spontaneously combust.

But I had no business asking God to kick-start the end of time. He hadn't put me in this situation. Neither had Jenny. I was in this situation because I wasn't a man yet.

I was twenty-four years old, beginning a six-year course of study that would earn me a Master's in Theology and a PhD in Psychology. I had big goals and great potential. I had close, loyal friends all over the country. I'd traveled the world and seen spectacular things. Most of all, I'd been a Christian since age seven. God had taken me on an amazing journey, and there was no reason to think that would change. But none of that mattered to me. All I cared about was getting a girlfriend. I thought a woman would make my life complete. That's why I drove an hour to see a girl with a boyfriend. That's why it devastated me when she showed up with her beau in tow. That's why I asked God to put a rush on the apocalypse because she wasn't holding my hand alone.

I approached dating like a guy instead of a man. Though I didn't know it then, that's why I felt like a fool. That's why this poor girl whom I hardly knew was carrying the weight of my self-worth. It was never hers to bear in the first place. I hadn't learned to get my sense of importance from God and the gifts he'd given me. I had no great passion other than finding a wife. I had yet to become a man.

Four years later, after a painful yet exhilarating process of growth, I finally started to become a man. That's when I figured out how to date. That's when I met the woman who would become my wife.

But that's a long story, and you're not reading this because you want my autobiography. You're reading because you want a girlfriend. Or maybe you're a woman who wants to give a guy a hand in the romance department. So let's cut to the chase.

There's a grim reality in the world of Christian dating that nobody talks about. A lot of men live in quiet frustration because they can't get a girlfriend. Most relationship books for Christians leap over this painful aspect of dating and jump into telling you how to work toward marriage. They assume that once a man finds a woman who's a good match, she'll go out with him and he'll know what to do.

Guys aren't eager to talk about this problem. The discussions on dating in Christian circles tend to focus on mate selection, sexual purity, and maintaining a healthy relationship. But you won't see a guy raise his hand and say, "This is all great stuff, but I get shot down every time I ask a woman out for coffee." It's humiliating, and guys seldom share this problem with even their closest friends.

If you aren't a man in this position, you probably know one who is. You've seen the guy who tries to get a date with every new woman who visits your church. Throw a few of these guys in a room together and your singles' group starts looking like a school of sharks circling a wounded seal. Other men are more passive and stay on the periphery, waiting for God to drop a cute Christian woman in their lap. Still others act out their pain and loneliness in more damaging ways, turning to pornography and even prostitutes.

There are a lot of reasons a man ends up in this situation. Some of them are deep seated and require time and hard work to remedy. Some guys just need to make a few changes in order to jump-start their dating lives. It might take only a little learning and some practice to improve your chances of getting that longed-for first date. However, most guys struggle because they're dating like, well, *guys*. A *man* approaches dating differently. He has confidence and passion. He's a risk-taker but not a foolish, reckless boy. He doesn't play games and he doesn't hide his agenda. And,

though he respects women immensely, he doesn't worship or fear them.

This book is designed to help you date like a man instead of a guy. We'll talk about things you can change and other things that you shouldn't. I'll give you tips on everything from asking a woman out to whether or not you should kiss her. Ya know, the stuff that keeps you awake at night. But we'll start by focusing on spiritual and emotional issues, the key components of manhood. Your relationship with God and your psychological life have a tremendous impact not only on dating but also on your masculinity and self-image.

Let's get a few things out of the way before we start.

First, this book will not turn you into a born-again Brad Pitt. You won't end up in a position to date any woman you choose. The woman is the one who makes the final decision to honor you with the opportunity of getting to know her better. However, this book will increase your chances of getting through the third date with a woman who interests you. By making some changes in your life and your approach to dating, your odds will improve. But, more importantly, you'll be a healthier, happier man who's not interested in becoming Brad Pitt.

Second, I realize that there are those who advocate *not* dating in favor of "friendship" until a couple is engaged. I'm not in that camp. I agree with Henry Cloud and John Townsend, authors of *Boundaries in Dating*, that "dating gives people a place to grow and learn in the safety of people who can help them develop."¹ Dating improves your chances of finding the right person and having a healthy relationship. It can be a healthy path of self-understanding and relational growth. But whether we call it "dating" or "friendship that leads to marriage," a lot of men feel frustrated either way. Jesus said, "But at the beginning of Creation, God 'made

The pressure for women to get married is even worse than the pressure for men to get married. Nothing in Scripture indicates that a woman has to get married. In fact, you need to go through periods when other things take priority over dating.



them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’” (Mark 10:6–8). Ever since God decided that it was “not good for the man to be alone” (Gen. 2:18) and blew Adam’s mind by creating Eve, men have been excited about getting together with women. It’s an excitement that’s bigger than friendship. It’s so intense that people leave their families to be together. Friendship is an indispensable part of dating, but the stakes aren’t as high when a man and a woman are “just friends.”

Third, I am not telling you that you need a girlfriend. Part of the anguish many men endure results from the pressure they feel to get married. If a man isn’t married by a certain age, we often treat him like a leper. Many churches build their ministries and social events around families and couples. Some even make marriage a prerequisite for leadership! The apostle Paul’s head would explode if he heard about this! Most of the New Testament’s heroes were single, so I’ll go out on a limb and say that it’s okay if you are too. Paul would say it’s *better* (1 Cor. 7:32–34).

Finally, this is a book for men and women. Though I’ll be speaking mainly to the gentlemen, the ladies should read along. We need women who understand the struggles men face when it comes to romance. Though this book focuses on the specific challenges that men face in dating, much

of it will apply to women. The rest will let the ladies in on some secrets about the male gender (yes, there are some). This book might also prove handy in helping a woman's male relative, friend, or that interesting man in her life who needs some, um, extra encouragement.

Still reading? Cool. We've got work to do, but I promise that a lot of it will be fun. But first, I have a secret for you in the first chapter.

1

“NEVER TELL ME THE ODDS!”

Despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, I have not been able to answer . . . the great question that has never been answered: What does a woman want?

—Sigmund Freud

Rick was angry with God. On a dark, cold night, he stood in the middle of a soccer field, shouting at the low clouds hiding the stars.

“God, why don’t you help me? How long do I have to wait?”

Rick had just learned that Christy, his closest friend since the beginning of college, was going on a date Friday night. She usually spent time with him on Friday nights. They both liked jazz and they would search the city until they found the place with the best music. After that, they would go to a diner and talk for the rest of the night. He didn’t see her much during the week because classes and jobs kept them both busy. He’d come to cherish the time they shared every Friday night. Now it was gone. Some other

More Than Friends

If your best friend is male, he probably wants more than friendship. There are exceptions to this, but not many. If you're spending most of your time with a guy, it's important to have an open discussion about his intentions (and yours). Otherwise, things might get a little psycho when you start dating someone else.



guy would be with her this Friday night. When Christy told him the guy was taking her to a jazz club, Rick thought he might puke.

Of course he had a crush on her. He assumed that she knew. How could she not know? He'd given up every Friday night in recent memory to spend time with her. She had long brown hair, shocking blue eyes, and more in common with him than any woman he'd met. Most important, she had a heart for God. She was exactly the kind of woman he wanted as a girlfriend. In fact, he was pretty sure he was in love with her.

He'd never made his feelings known because he didn't think she liked him "in that way." She'd never expressed anything beyond friendship, and he was afraid of losing her if he revealed his true feelings. He knew he wouldn't be able to stand it if she rejected him, so he decided to wait. If they were meant to be together, God would give him a sign. So far, there'd been no writing on the wall.

When she told him that she was going on a date, Rick panicked. He held it together as she told him about it over the phone but darted out to the soccer field as soon as he hung up. He didn't want his roommate to see him freak out.

Now, he was standing in the soccer field, crying and begging God to tell him what to do. But God was silent.

Rick gave up, went back to his room, and collapsed on the bed. His roommate Brian walked in and saw that his friend was in pain.

“What’s wrong, man?” Brian asked.

“Christy. She’s going out on a date tomorrow night instead of hanging out with me.”

“I’m not surprised,” Brian said.

“What?” said Rick, jumping up from the bed. “How can you say that? I’m dying over here and you’re making fun of me.”

“Not at all,” Brian said. “I’m just surprised she didn’t give up on you sooner. You guys have been hanging out since freshman year, and you still haven’t told her how you feel. I’d expect her to move on by now.”

“But God hasn’t given me a sign that we should be together.”

Brian started laughing but stopped that when he saw the frenzied look in Rick’s eyes. Brian hurried to explain himself before Rick socked him.

“You’re trying God’s patience. You want a sign? How about hanging out with the same person every Friday for three years? How about getting along with a woman so well that you don’t even think of asking anyone else out? How about the fact that she’s so pretty that you blush when she looks at you? Do you need God to talk to you from a whirlwind or set something on fire before you’re sure?”

“What should I do?” Rick asked.

“That’s an easy one. Tell her how you feel.”

“But what if she doesn’t feel the same way?”

“That’s a risk you have to take. If you don’t, she’s going out with someone else tomorrow night.”

Rick's face softened, and tears came to his eyes. "Every girl I asked out in high school turned me down. I couldn't even get a date to prom. It made me give up on dating. I couldn't handle that kind of rejection from Christy. I love her too much."

"If you really love her, she deserves courage from you. Is she worth taking a risk for?"

Rick thought for a minute and said, "Yeah. Absolutely."

"The women's dorm closes at midnight," Brian said. "That gives you ten minutes."

Brian had never seen Rick move so fast. He burst out the door and sprinted across the quad toward Christy's dorm. He was out of breath by the time he got to her room. He pounded on the door, and Christy opened, thinking the building was on fire. She looked at Rick with wide-eyed surprise.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"I love you," he said. "I'm sorry I never told you before. I was scared. But I have to tell you now, before you go out with somebody else."

Christy's mouth dropped open, and her eyebrows shot up. She went almost a minute without saying anything. Rick was fairly sure he would pass out if she didn't speak soon. Finally, she sighed and shook her head.

"It took you long enough," she said. "Another guy had to ask me out before you'd tell me?"

"I'm so sorry."

"You've wasted a lot of time," Christy said.

"You're right. I wish I'd said something sooner. I think we need to talk."

"I can't talk right now."

Rick started to panic again. "Why not?"

"Because I have to make a phone call. I need to cancel a date for Friday night."

Rick’s story had a happy ending, but not every guy’s does. When a guy is attracted to a woman, he often doesn’t know what to do. Some men, like Rick, wait for a sign. Other men don’t wait for any signs from God or the woman, and plunge in without thinking. Either way, a lot of guys panic when they meet the woman of their dreams.

So, you want a girlfriend. Not only that, you want a Christian girlfriend. However you define it—Protestant, Catholic, evangelical, born-again, Spirit-filled, consecrated, sister in Christ, whatever—you only see yourself with a woman who shares your love for God. Good for you. In fact, if that’s not important to you, stop reading now.

Still here? Good, because I’ve got a secret for you, one that I’ll wager no one has told you: you’ve got your work cut out for you, pal.

Dating is harder for Christian men. You might think it’s because of sexual purity issues, but it’s not just that. The whole courtship process is more complicated. Questions about morality, theology, worship, intimacy, and God’s will get involved. Relationships are hard enough for men who don’t care about this kind of stuff. Dating is twice as complicated for Christians.

Also, non-Christian guys don’t care as much about a woman’s relationship with God. Seeking a Christian girlfriend shrinks the field of available women. Most of the women you meet won’t share your faith. Finding a perfect match is tough enough, but the odds are even worse when you expect her to have a relationship with Christ. This results in a sense of urgency when a Christian man meets a woman he’d like to ask out. He meets a woman who defies the odds, and he panics. He finds the equivalent of a winning lottery ticket but doesn’t know how to cash it in.

Despite the odds against you, dating can become easier. Notice I said *easier*, not *easy*. Yes, there are couples for whom everything comes naturally. They have perfect communication, they're happy all the time, and they knew they were destined to be with each other from the instant they met. These are the couples that make the rest of us nauseous. And they're happy exceptions. Most of the time, dating requires hard work.

The toughest part begins long before you meet an interesting and attractive woman. First, you have to become a man. Next, you have to learn to relate to women like a man instead of a guy. After that, the rest isn't quite easy, but it will feel more natural and genuine. The stakes won't feel as high, and you'll have more to offer the woman you ask out. But the best part is that your life will be more complete regardless of whether you're dating or not. Better dating is only a byproduct of a process of growth that has many other benefits.

Through the course of this book, we're going to discuss five things that will make dating easier.

1. Become the best man you can be without faking it. This means your first priority isn't impressing a woman. It's growing closer to God and establishing a sense of identity, meaning, and purpose.
2. Become more assertive with women while remaining respectful.
3. Learn how to make a *genuine* first impression on a woman, get to know her, and determine if she's someone you should ask out.
4. Develop a game plan for the first three dates focused on assessing compatibility.
5. Add romance to the relationship at the right time.

In *The Empire Strikes Back*, Han Solo pilots the *Millennium Falcon* into an asteroid field while fleeing an Imperial Star Destroyer. C-3PO tells Solo that the odds of successfully navigating an asteroid field are 3,720 to 1. The odds against a Christian *guy* finding a woman who’s both Christian and a good match for him aren’t much better than that. But a Christian *man* responds to such numbers the same way Han Solo replied to Threepio:

“Never tell me the odds!”

Han Solo made it through the asteroid field, taking a break in the middle to kiss Princess Leia. Han Solo wasn’t a guy—he was a man. It takes a man to disregard the odds and forge ahead.

Turn the page and let’s get started.