

3. Where do you see yourself in ten years? Do your current choices support your dreams, or could they hinder them?

Chapter 4

Interacting with Boys

4. On a scale of one to ten, where is your self-control? Will you be able to monitor yourself in college without an adult keeping tabs? How can you keep yourself accountable?

*Truth #7: Chasing boys doesn't make you cool.
It makes you a nuisance.*

5. Is there a negative influence nudging (or pulling) you down the wrong path? If so, how can you resist that pressure? What positive influences in your life keep you grounded?

Tn my community, there is a woman named Donna Greene.³ Donna knows girls. Donna loves girls. Donna has spent the past forty years ministering to teenage girls, helping them find Christ and cope with the struggles of growing up by applying truth.

More than four thousand girls have participated in Donna's Community Ministry for Girls. She's amazing, and what I love most about Donna is how she invests in these girls' lives. Long after high school graduation she stays involved, attending their weddings, meeting their newborn babies in the hospital, and showing up for special moments.

At the wedding reception of one couple in their late twenties, something interesting happened to Donna. She was making her rounds in the ballroom when suddenly she looked up and realized a circle of young men had surrounded her. The huddle formed quickly, creating a seal so tight she couldn't escape if she wanted to.

One guy, the spokesman, introduced himself and said, "We just wanted you to know that when we were in high school, we had an I-Hate-Donna-Green Club."

Donna looked at the young man perplexed. What on earth was he saying?

"We'd get together and talk about you," the young man continued, "because all those girls of yours wouldn't do anything with us."

He didn't qualify his statements, which left Donna more perplexed. She had no idea where this conversation was headed or how was she supposed to reply. But as it turned out, a reply wasn't necessary. What played out next spoke for itself.

In unison, in a gesture they had clearly planned, these young men held out their hands to Donna and asked to shake her hand.

"Thank you, Donna," the leader explained, "because these are the girls we're marrying."

charged. You're part of a generation that competes for boys and gives them what they want to win their affection. Waiting for males to act first is old school; if you like what you see, you're told to go for it.

But seeking Mr. Right this way inadvertently makes you Ms. Wrong. *Guys may be dying to date Ms. Wrong, but they won't be dying to marry her.*

This chapter is one of the most important sections of this book. Of all the forces that can lure you off track, nothing works quicker than a misguided quest for love. You'll hear a lot of conflicting advice on finding your heart's desire, and my intention is to set the record straight. I want to help you connect the dots between boys, dating, marriage, and sex.

**"FOR IN HIM ALL THINGS WERE
CREATED: THINGS IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH,
VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE, WHETHER THRONES
OR POWERS OR RULERS OR AUTHORITIES; ALL
THINGS HAVE BEEN CREATED THROUGH HIM AND
FOR HIM."**

(COLOSSIANS 1:16)

As I'm sure you know, we live in a world that is fast and sexually

Why do the trusted adults in your life promote purity and saving sex for marriage? Why would teenage boys who once had an "I-Hate-Donna-Green Club" later change their tune and publicly thank this mentor of young girls for encouraging them to stay virtuous and resist pressure from boys, friends, and the world at large?

The answers are coming, but upfront you should know that your journey toward womanhood begins with one Man. Only He can affirm your worth. Only He can lead you to love. Only He can help you make choices that protect your heart, your future, and what God has in store for you.

WHO IS THE CENTER OF YOUR UNIVERSE?

Somewhere in science class, you learned about the solar system. You studied the planets, the sun, and how they relate in the universe.

In many ways, your life is like a planet. You were designed to revolve around a sun. Without your sun, you can't exist. You lose your source of light, life, and gravity to stay in orbit. So let me ask this: Who is the "sun" in your life? Who is the center of your universe? Who nourishes and sustains you, giving purpose to your day and propelling you out of bed each morning?

God designed you to revolve around Christ. Only His Son can function as your sun. You can put other people and passions

in Christ's place, but eventually they'll fail you. Sooner or later, your orbit will be rocked.

Keeping Christ at the center of your universe is harder than it sounds. Because you're human and part of a fallen species that is sinful and selfish by nature (due to original sin), you'll constantly fight the urge to make other things your number one. It might be something good—like friends, good grades, a love for soccer—or it might be something self-destructive. Either way, when anything other than Christ becomes your sun, you have a false idol. You've taken an earthly pleasure that can never satisfy your deepest needs and made it the center of your existence.

Why is this relevant to boys? *Because one common mistake girls make is putting boys at the center of their universe.* Besides setting you up for disappointment, this puts unfair pressure on the boys. It forces them into a role they were never meant to play, to be a girl's end-all, be-all, everything.

Girls who obsess over boys and center their lives around them have always been around. However, this phenomenon is amplified today due to (1) a rising culture of female aggressiveness that makes it socially acceptable to chase boys and (2) technology. Thanks to cell phones and social media, you can access boys all the time. You don't have to wait for them to call you; you can call them. You don't have to wonder what they're doing; you can simply text them or check their Twitter feed. Chasing and obsessing over boys has practically become a national sport for girls. And while some celebrate this as a

victory for our gender. I believe it's the downfall of healthy relationships. All this excessive attention and communication actually smothers boys. It makes them want to run the other way and find a girl who isn't overbearing.

What you should know is this: *Chasing boys doesn't make you cool. It makes you a nuisance.* One thing I hear repeatedly from moms with sons is how girls today are very forward. They constantly call and text, and the boys don't like it.

Boys enjoy and need a challenge. They lose interest when a girl takes the lead. You may think you're making progress, but really you're making yourself look bad. You're also damaging your internal spirit, because your self-perception is as important as the public perception you create. God created you to guard your heart (Proverbs 4:23), not freely give it away to the guys who come and go.

When you do reach out to a boy, it isn't just him receiving your message. It's his circle of friends and family, too, because more often than not, he's with other people.

Imagine all his buddies at baseball practice watching his phone rattle on the bench in the dugout. After the third or fourth time, they gather around. They start quizzing him and teasing him. *Dude, who keeps texting you? What does she want? She's hot for you, isn't she? Seriously; does she ever leave you alone?*

Imagine his family at the dinner table, enjoying a meal. They're getting a little irritated as you blow up his phone and interrupt their conversation. "Why does Jennifer call you all

the time?" his little sister asks, addressing the elephant in the room. "Are you her only friend?"

Am I telling you it's wrong to speak or interact with boys? Of course not. It's fine to show interest in a boy. It's okay to initiate conversation, smile, make eye contact, and express enough interest to let him know you'd like him to pursue you. If he calls first, call him back. If he texts you, text him back.

But don't be desperate. Because when you ask a boy out, plan dates, and call and text excessively, that's how you come across. You also want to avoid building your life around a boy. Not only does this hurt your relationship, it holds you back from achieving your own goals and pursuing your interests.

One regret I often hear from women is the regret of dating too seriously as teenagers. Instead of investing so much time in a serious relationship, they wish they'd invested that time in themselves.

You have gifts to change the world. And when you don't use them, when you hide them or forget they exist, your gifts go to waste. You may think you'll never make a boy your number one, never push Christ aside or give up personal dreams to keep your boyfriend happy, but at some point you'll be tempted. When the right boy comes along, you'll want to drop everything and follow him.

Following your true love may work once you reach marrying age, but doing it now—in your teen years, when your identity is still forming—is a poor use of precious time.

“FOR IN CHRIST ALL THE FULLNESS OF THE DEITY LIVES IN BODILY FORM, AND IN CHRIST YOU HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TO FULLNESS. HE IS THE HEAD OVER EVERY POWER AND AUTHORITY.”

(COLOSSIANS 2:9-10)



If you haven't already, you'll meet a boy one day who reduces your IQ. All logic will vanish as you fall under the spell of his crooked smile, dreamy eyes, sense of humor, and funny jokes. When you're in class, you'll daydream about him. When you walk the halls, you'll look for his face in the crowd, hoping for a quick fix to get you through the day.

Welcome to the Land of Romance, my dear. I hope you enjoy the stay.

Falling for a new crush is intense. You may think you'll never fall so hard again. But you will . . . again and again you will. New crushes round the corner all the time, and each one will cast a different spell on you.

Sometimes your crush will crush back. You'll discover your feelings are mutual and fall head-over-heels together. I won't lie; this part is awesome. It's fun and thrilling to realize a boy likes you as much as you like him—maybe more. The bliss of being together makes it hard to be apart. As your romance blooms, the rest of your life may seem small and insignificant in comparison. You may be tempted to postpone your plans so you and your new love can carve out more time together.

But please don't. Don't put off your ambitions. Don't re-arrange your life. Don't over-invest in the relationship. Enjoy dating him, but don't put your boyfriend center stage. No matter how great your relationship is, it won't last. You won't marry the boy you date in junior high or high school, and if by some remote chance you do, you're still doing yourself a disservice by focusing too much time on him.

When I was in the eighth grade, I had my first big crush. We had pre-algebra together, and even though he didn't pay attention to me, I was very self-conscious around him.

I needed glasses to see the chalkboard, but letting my crush see my nerd look was unthinkable. So instead of keeping up in pre-algebra, I fell behind. I made a C and wound up needing a tutor. All because I was embarrassed to wear glasses around “him.”

When I think about that year, that crush, and that silly fear of my eyewear, I want to reach back through time and shake my thirteen-year-old self. The fact that a good student would accept a C for a boy who barely acknowledged her existence is compelling proof that (1) I was an idiot and (2) girls will do crazy things for love sometimes.



Why? Because now is the time to be chasing dreams, not your future husband. Now is the time to cultivate the God-given talents that will enable you to (1) figure out your life calling and (2) get a job to support yourself.

You may be thinking, *But I just want to be a wife and mom. Why do I need a job if I never plan to work?* Here's the answer: because every able woman should know how to earn a living. What if you don't meet the man of your dreams until you're thirty? Who will pay your bills until then? What if you do marry out of college, but ten years later your husband gets sick, and your family needs you to bring home a salary? Will you be capable?

I started dating my husband when I was twenty-three, which is relatively young. Within a month we knew we'd get married, but we waited three years because he lived in a different city and I loved my job. To this day, I take great pride in those four years I supported myself and earned career recognition. I'm glad I was able to marry a man *not* by necessity—because I needed financial support—but by choice. Knowing I could find a job again if my family ever needs the income brings me great comfort. After all, none of us know what the future holds.

I believe all girls should live on their own at least a few years before tying the knot. Besides building character and self-esteem, this teaches you the value of a dollar. Money takes on a new meaning when you alone have to earn it, and while it's easy to blow through someone else's wallet (think of your parents, and how quickly you'll spend *their* money), blowing through your own is another story.

Dating is a healthy part of growing up when done correctly and at the right time. Spending time with different personalities helps you see what you do and don't like in the opposite sex. But when you find yourself growing serious with a boy, keep it in check. Don't invest so much in his needs that you neglect your own.

A healthy relationship will draw you closer to those who love you: God, your family, and your friends. It will boost your confidence as you work toward goals. A healthy relationship will not do the following things:

- Isolate you from friends or family because you're ditching them to be with him
- Cause your grades to slip because you're out on the town when you should be studying
- Fill you with self-doubt
- Put you on an emotional roller coaster

As I mentioned, your relationship almost certainly will end. So think about how you'll feel when that happens.

- Will you resent the time you poured into your boyfriend—or be thankful he made you a better person?
- Will you regret getting sidetracked from your goals—or say he encouraged you like you encouraged him?
- Will the break-up feel like the end of the world—or will it end amicably, leaving the door open for a future friendship?

- Will you be ashamed of how you engaged sexually—or thankful you held back in moments of temptation, saving your body for your husband?

Whoever he is, he isn't worth obsessing over. He isn't worth the attention he takes away from your life purpose. Please don't sell yourself short or believe your most important contribution to this world is keeping a boy happy. God's plan for you aims way higher than that. A boy may be part of your plan, but he will never be *The Plan*.

You have a role in building God's kingdom. It's up to you to use your resources and notice the opportunities God places on your path. Yes, a boy can enhance your life tremendously, but he'll never complete you. Only Christ can complete you, and if you want to make investments you won't regret, invest in things that ultimately serve Him.

THERE ARE GIRLS BOYS DATE AND GIRLS BOYS MARRY

What a boy wants at age sixteen is different from what he'll want at twenty-six. So if you want him long term, do not be the short term.

At sixteen, he's not looking for everlasting love. He's not thinking about soul mates. Even if he entertains notions of marriage with you, marriage is not the primary topic on a boy's mind. What is? Well, let me shoot it to you straight:

SEX.

Sex, sex, sex. That is what boys your age primarily think about, even if it may be the last thing on your mind. It is what they talk about too, which is why anything you do with a boy won't be kept confidential. He may be trustworthy while you date, but once you break up, all bets are off. I'm not condoning this behavior, but I want you to know it happens. The boy you thought was a steel vault may become an open book as he shares your intimate secrets with friends—or worse yet, a locker room full of jocks.

You know how it's hard for girls not to gossip, how it just happens when you're together? Well, pull some guys together and their lips get loose too. Besides talking about sex, guys trade information on girls. They share any scoop they have: what girls are easy, what girls aren't, who sleeps around, who won't. Discussing sexual conquests is a frequent topic of conversation

“DO NOT CONFORM TO THE PATTERN OF THIS WORLD, BUT BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND. THEN YOU WILL BE ABLE TO TEST AND APPROVE WHAT GOD'S WILL IS—THIS GOOD, PLEASING AND PERFECT WILL”

(ROMANS 12:2)

for boys. Many try to prove their manhood by bragging about who can't resist them.

It's immature and rude to behave this way, but I'm letting you know that it happens, and you'd be wise to remember this when you are making decisions about dating.

In the locker room, stories really tend to get embellished. Guys often one-up each other to enhance their image. As one father I know told his teenage daughter, "Whatever you really do, it will get exaggerated in the locker room. So if you kiss him, he'll tell everyone he touched your breasts."

Consider yourself warned, my friend.

Am I saying all boys are jerks? That you might as well write them off now? No. What I'm saying is that teenage boys have a lot of growing up to do. And honestly, so do teenage girls. God is working on the boys just like He's working on you. Many boys (but not all) will make great progress in the next ten to fifteen years. They'll mature and become good men with stable jobs and a desire to provide for others, including their wife and children.

But right now, boys are after a good time. They're having sexual thoughts that would make your cheeks blaze with embarrassment. Even "nice guys" fight internal battles with their sex drive. They've been raised to treat women with respect. They know it's their duty to protect a girl's purity. Yet when they're attracted to a girl, their minds get lustful. They want to act on their desires, not wrestle with them. They want to forget what they *should* do and do what feels right.

Teenage boys are naturally inclined to be aggressive, so what do you think happens when you add promiscuous, aggressive females to the mix? Lots and lots of sex, right? A hook-up culture like what we see today?

Sadly, that is the dating scene you're dealing with. On one side you have oversexed boys with raging hormones. On the other side are girls willing to feed the beast. For every boy who's after a good time, there are three females lined up to give him one, oftentimes because they have low self-esteem or other issues that mistakenly lead them to believe that sex will translate into love. Fueling the fire has never been easier.

It isn't one sex corrupting the other; it is both genders corrupting each other. Instead of seeing each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, teenage boys and girls often use each other for personal motives and pleasures. Then they wonder why they can't get respect or settle into a healthy relationship. God didn't create sex to be used this way. He didn't create it for teenagers who fall madly in love and plan to get married one day, either. God created sex for marriage, and when shared between a husband and wife, it's wonderful and holy.

But take sex out of its proper context and problems abound. Without the commitment of marriage, that promise before God, sex will make you more insecure and clingy. You'll get emotionally attached even if you agree to "no strings attached." It is impossible *not* to get attached, because no amount of willpower can keep your heart from getting involved. What

you do with your body affects your heart and soul. Sex outside of marriage creates scars that stay with you forever.

So what am I suggesting you do? I'm suggesting you remember that Donna Greene story about the young men at the wedding, because it's a great illustration of how most boys change over time. While some men never mature and will never acquire a responsible mind-set toward women and sex, the guys worth having in your life *will* evolve. They'll become men you can imagine following to the ends of the earth because their love for you is as genuine and selfless as your love for them.

They'll still have a sex drive. They'll still consider physical attraction very important. They'll still want a girl who is fun and makes them happy. But also factoring into their dating choices will be considerations like these:

- Could I marry this girl? Do I want to grow old together?
- Can I imagine her as the mother of my children? Is she the role model I want for my daughters and sons?
- Does she make me a better person? Am I happiest when I'm with her?
- Do we connect spiritually? Does that spiritual connection deepen our physical connection? Does she believe in God, and will she help me create a faithful home?
- What do my friends and family think of her? What is my mother's verdict?

- Will she be an asset to my career? Will I be proud to introduce her to my boss and co-workers?
- Do our dreams align, and will we be able to help each other reach them?
- Do I love her more than anyone on earth?
- If she gets away, will I regret it forever?

Come marrying time, guys worth having set high standards. A girl who got overlooked in high school or college may suddenly be considered the ideal mate. Guys may date the fun girl, but they want to marry the package—someone who is smart, pretty, kind, real, fun, confident, and overall amazing. They want the girl who wasn't conquered by every boy and his brother, whose name wasn't dragged through mud during locker room dialogue.

Likewise, girls should also have high expectations for their future spouse. You deserve a man who has held himself to the same standards you have.

Make good choices now, and you'll be much more likely to have good men interested in marrying you later. Don't worry if boys aren't beating down your door or begging for dates. Consider it a blessing if they choose the wild girls over you. To me that's a sign you're on the right track. Stay true to yourself and a path God can bless, and eventually the boys worth having (those who respect you and your virtues) will come around.

REMEMBER: YOU'RE A WOMAN OF GOD

We covered a lot of ground regarding boys, dating, marriage, and sex. Here are some final thoughts:

1. Chasing boys may capture their attention, but it won't capture their heart.

God wired boys to be the pursuer, not the pursued. He wants them to take the lead because it cultivates them into young men. It prepares them for their future roles as husbands, providers, and leaders of the home. You aren't doing boys a favor by taking the risk of rejection off them; you're depriving them of an experience that helps them grow up and mature.

Guys take pleasure in the pursuit, and if they're attracted to you, they'll go after you. You can't force chemistry, nor will you "grow" on anyone by being pushy. A boy either is or isn't attracted to you. This is also true for girls, of course, as even the best laid plans from a persistent boy can't make you like him, right?

The way a relationship begins sets the tone. So if you start in role reversal, catching your heart's desire by chasing him, expect to continue taking the lead. Don't count on your boyfriend to court you, plan special dates, or initiate contact. Don't be surprised if he is passive and lukewarm in his feelings toward you. The reason teenage boys are often lazy daters is because they can be. Why ask girls out when girls will ask them? Why make dinner reservations when your girlfriend agrees to meet up with friends and count it as a "date"?

If you want a boy to court you, don't make it too easy. Let him work a little, because a guy worth having will rise to the challenge. I'm not telling you to play hard to get or mess with a boy's mind. I'm simply suggesting that you set reasonable standards. If a boy wants a date, have him pick you up and meet your parents. If he calls you Friday afternoon to go out Friday night, be wary if this becomes a pattern. A real date should be planned several days in advance, not thrown together as an afterthought—or after someone else cancelled on him.

Remember, you're a woman of God. And by making your life rich and fulfilling before a boy enters the picture, boys (and girls) will long to be part of your world.

2. Pure relationships allow you to stay friendly with your exes. You never know who will reenter your life.

A guy I know lives in the same community with two ex-girlfriends. All three of them have children the same age, so their paths cross a lot.

He's remained good friends with one ex-girlfriend because their relationship was short and innocent. His son and her daughter are close friends, and their families hang out together. But with his second ex-girlfriend, he can't interact like that because their relationship was heavy and sexual. They were best friends before they dated, so when they broke up, he lost his best friend.

While everyone is happily married, the awkwardness remains. Once you cross certain lines with boys, there's no going back. Even twenty, thirty, or forty years later, the memories

linger. Staying mindful of this may help you think twice before getting physical.

3. Dating is about selectivity, not settling.

The purpose of dating is to find the *one person* you want to marry. Selectivity is the name of the game as you and the boys you date discover what you do and don't like in the opposite sex. This is a time to find out if you and your date have the same values and goals in life.

With some boys, you'll know immediately whether you're compatible. There may be one date—and that's it. With other boys, you'll want to dig deeper. You may date a few months to explore the potential.

Over time, you'll uncover qualities that aren't readily apparent. You may decide, "I love how he always treats me like a lady. I want that in a husband," or, "I need more affection. He won't even hold my hand in public. My husband has to be affectionate."

Through dating and friendships with the opposite sex, you discern the qualities you like. You learn how to interact with boys and build a radar for those you can trust (the protectors) and those you can't (the predators). After many years of this, you gain clarity of what you're looking for in a life partner so that when you finally meet your husband, you're ready.

4. Purity is a choice you won't regret.

Your future husband is out there. He may be three minutes away or three thousand miles across the country, going about life like you.

One day, when you two get serious and start talking about marriage, you'll need to share intimate details about your past.

He'll give you the breakdown on his, and you'll do the same. This could be a hard conversation. There could be hurt feelings and tears as confessions about old flames and flings get laid on the table for you or him to come to terms with.

As difficult as this conversation may be, it's necessary. A marriage deserves full honesty, and keeping secrets isn't fair to your spouse. Secrets have a way of revealing themselves in time, and hiding yours will only cause more harm and feelings of betrayal when the truth emerges.

The choices you make with boys are *not* carried to your grave; they're carried into your marriage. When the time comes for your big conversation, I want you to feel proud. I want you to watch your husband's face light up because you just told him how you've saved the sacred gift of your body for him alone.

The boys you date now won't be your spouse. They're meant to lead you to your spouse, just as you'll help lead them to theirs. Your best dating approach is to treat them like you hope some girl is treating your future husband—as his guardian, not his lover. By protecting your purity *and* the purity of the boys you date, you'll grow closer than you ever could having sex.

While the boys may not appreciate that now, they will one day. So will their spouses. Love says, "I can wait." Lust says, "I have to have it now."

If you've had sex already, it isn't too late to change. Confess your sins and let God's grace and forgiveness make you new. Ask God to help you stay pure. Remember, He'll give you a way out whenever you're tempted (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Be patient as you wait for Mr. Right. He isn't marriage material yet because God is working on him just as He's working on you. Seek God's will for *your life*, develop *your potential*, and keep boys in the proper perspective.

When you focus on bettering yourself, you don't need to chase boys because eventually, the right boy will find you.

3. Do you believe sex should be saved for marriage? If so, have you made a conscious commitment to protect your purity even when you fall in love?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever put a dream on hold for a boy? Do you ever make sacrifices—like helping your boyfriend with a class project when you really need to study for a test—that ultimately hurt you?
2. Do girls at your school chase boys? If so, what are your thoughts? Based on your observations, do you see a difference between relationships led by boys versus those led by girls?
3. Do you believe sex should be saved for marriage? If so, have you made a conscious commitment to protect your purity even when you fall in love?
4. Why do guys make good friends? What can they offer that girlfriends can't? What do you like about the opposite sex? What do you dislike?

5. How might teen culture change if everyone treated each other as brothers and sisters in Christ? If a boy protected your purity by holding back on his sexual urges, would you consider him backward or trustworthy? Would it weaken your relationship or strengthen it?

Self-V

Chapter 5

Truth #6

I knew I was my father's son. I was in one of the best For most students on campus and I liked classes, because

The historian in reality and prided himself thought I'd be willing to do it