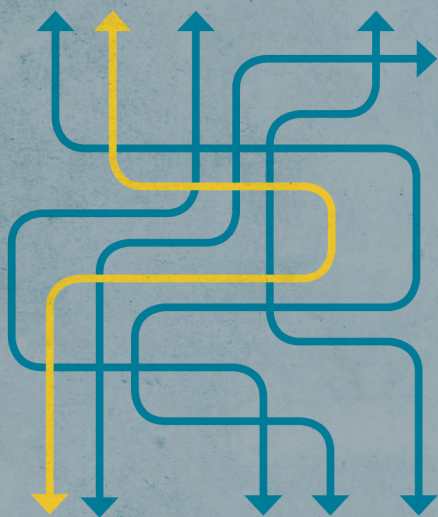


JEFFREY WALLACE, MIKE HAMMER, & MATTY MCCAGE

99 THINGS



**EVERY
GUY
SHOULD
KNOW**

NAVIGATING RELATIONSHIPS, SUCCESS,
AND LIFE'S OTHER BIG STUFF



YouthMinistry.com/TOGETHER

99 Things Every Guy Should Know

Navigating Relationships, Success, and Life's Other Big Stuff

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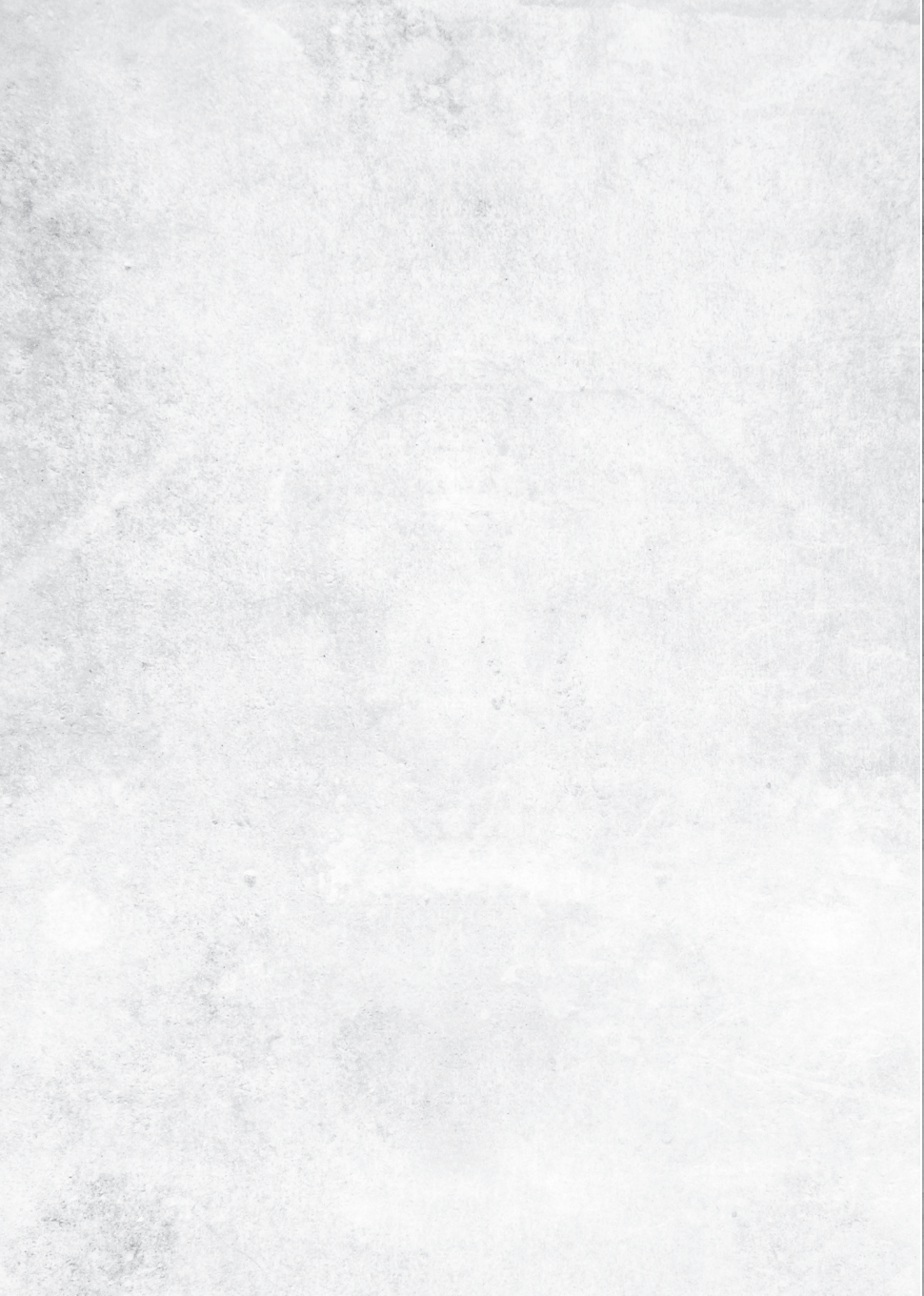


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INTRODUCTION

Writing this book brought back so many memories of life as a teenager. Pimples, crazy hairstyles, reversible sweatshirts, overhaul shorts—those were some good times! The three of us grew up in a different era from you, and every now and then, our friends and family members pull out awkward photos and tell embarrassing stories from those days. (Don't laugh too hard—this will happen to you someday, too!) And though the context of our teenage years differs from yours, we still struggled with the same issues of life as you do. It's part of being a guy!

We really hope you enjoy the book, laugh at our stupidity, and take some of it to heart. Don't treat it like a textbook. Feel free to bounce around and focus on the areas that are most important to you right now. Sometimes you'll see that one of us is sharing a personal story; other times we've put our brains together to offer some collective wisdom and advice.

But before we cut you loose, there's one ultimate thought we want you to walk away with.

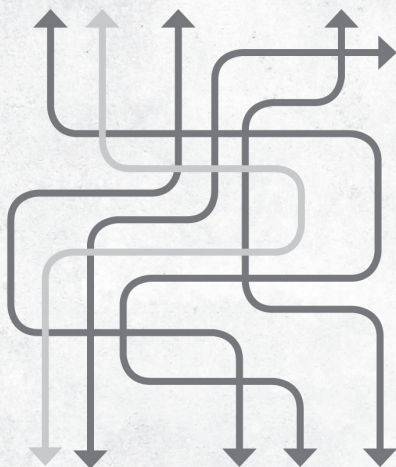
No matter where you are in your spiritual journey, there is a Creator who desires more than anything to be your Father. We understand that not everyone who reads this book has a great father/son relationship. Some of you can't wait to see your dad today, some are dreading when he'll walk through the door, and others of you have never met your dad. Regardless of your situation, please know that God's greatest longing for you is to move from being his *creation* to being his *child*. In God's arms you'll find love, encouragement, wisdom, healing, and life. That's the greatest and most basic thought you ought to know.

Know that you're loved and prayed for!

Jeffrey, Mike, and Matty

CHAPTER 1

RELATIONSHIPS





3 THOUGHTS ABOUT FAMILY

1. MAINTAIN REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

I (Matty) was raised by imperfect parents. There were times I felt they grew angry too quickly, yelled too loudly, and punished too harshly. While we can debate whether my memories of those situations are accurate or not, a couple of things are certain: *I pushed my parents to the limit, and they loved me more than I'll ever know.*

One day my children will tell their friends how I snapped to conclusions, yelled to the point where I went hoarse, and threatened to throw away every toy they owned. They will recall how imperfect I was (and am). But one thing they will know for sure is that I loved them more than I could fully show them.

Parenting isn't easy, and parents make mistakes. Trust me when I say, "We know when we blow it, and we're not happy about it either."

2. FAMILY IS WHAT YOU MAKE OF IT

Last night, my wife, Joyce, and I (Matty) watched our kids eat dinner at the table. They were full of smiles, laughter, and happiness. I was amazed at how much they not only loved each other but also loved to be together. I asked Joyce if she had similar memories from her childhood, and she did.

I don't have many memories of my sisters and me getting along that well. It's not that we didn't love each other; we just didn't know how to get along. Families aren't void of conflict but overcome conflict together. Families aren't fully put together but require a lot of assembly (you'll hate that term when you become a dad).

Your family is just that: *your family*. It is what you make of it. Take ownership and choose to make great memories full of love and excitement.

3. FAMILY LOVE IS A VAGUE LOVE

Every person has a way they feel love. Some people respond well when someone says something nice and nurturing to them, and others respond better if something is done for them. In his book *The Five Love Languages*, author Gary Chapman identifies five “languages” or ways of communicating love: *words of affirmation, physical touch, receiving gifts, quality time, and acts of service*.

Before concluding that your family doesn’t love you, first decide which language you respond to best. Then write down each one of your immediate family members and their love language next to their name. Chances are they’re showing they love you in the same method they respond to best.

Remember, love can be a very confusing thing for people to show. Most parents simply reflect the way they were raised and were shown love. Love not only requires us to have an open heart but an open mind as well.



3 THOUGHTS ABOUT FRIENDS

4. LEARN TO PRACTICE DISCERNMENT

Not everyone needs to be in your space. To be honest, not everyone has earned that right. My grandmother (Matty here) used to always remind me as I was getting older, “You’re known by the company you keep.” At first I thought she was crazy, but then I noticed the look in her eye and realized she wasn’t crazy—she was dead serious!

I made a lot of bad decisions (and a few *really* bad ones) as I was growing up, and none of them were made on my own. Someone was always there convincing me to make a bad choice, or I was willing to compromise everything for another person. Either way, if I had surrounded myself with better people, I would probably have fewer “scars” and less “baggage” to deal with today.



5. IT'S ALL ABOUT YOUR VERTICAL

Growing up, playing basketball was one of my (Matty here) favorite things to do. I would spend every chance I could on the driveway dribbling my “Dr. J” basketball and imagining I was Isaiah Thomas running a fast break for the Pistons. Every time, when I would drive the lane, I would stretch myself a little more in the hopes of slamming the ball down with all fury and ripping the rim off the backboard. But I had one HUGE problem: My vertical was weak!

I tried every day to jump a little higher than before, and as my vertical grew so did my confidence. When we think about our relationships, everything really hinges on how healthy our “vertical” is. Where is your relationship with God right now? If you’re not sure, look at your friendships. As our relationship with God grows stronger (our vertical), we will have healthier friendships and will choose them more wisely. And as our relationship with God grows, so will our confidence.

6. KNOWING WHEN TO LET A “FRIEND” GO

I (Matty) am an emotional hoarder. I hate letting relationships go and will hold on to them until the bitter end—and even then I have a hard time letting go. There are people on my contact list that haven’t responded to text messages from a year ago, yet I can’t let go. What if they come back around? What if they decide to accept my apology? What if they change?

To be honest, I need to “let go” of a lot of people. The relationships weren’t healthy (*unhealthy* doesn’t always mean *unholy*), and I would do well to move forward. A good rule of thumb I have to remind myself to live by is, *“If I feel the need to ‘please,’ then I need to say ‘peace.’ ”*





3 THOUGHTS ABOUT ENEMIES

7. YOU'VE GOTTA LET IT GO

One of the biggest struggles in my life (Matty) has been letting go of the anger and hurt I feel when someone lies to me, hurts me, or betrays me. My first (and most honest) reaction is to either verbally unload on them or let my fist have a conversation with their face. Basically, I want to hurt them back. Unfortunately, while that might help me feel vindicated, neither of these approaches gets me anywhere.

I think this is why Jesus said to “turn the other cheek.” At first I thought this was a weak approach and that Jesus was wussing out. As I’ve gotten older, I’ve realized Jesus wants me to turn the other cheek so I can have a heart that honors him and works to forgive those who mess with me. It wasn’t a weak approach he was teaching, but a meek one.

8. PEOPLE ARE GOING TO HURT YOU

Getting hurt really bites! No one wakes up in the morning hoping someone is going to trash their reputation, post something hurtful on a social media site, or stab them in the back. Yet somehow it feels like we have a neon target on our backs, begging for someone to blast us.

The reality is that everyone has someone in their life who's hurt them, and we can't control that. What we can control is if we choose to respond with forgiveness when that person hurts us or if we react with emotion and, in turn, hurt someone else.

9. LEARN TO RESPOND AND NOT REACT

One of my “claims to fame” (Matty here) as a teenager was how quickly I could lose my temper. I could go from 0 to 60 in 2.2 seconds if someone pushed the right button—and when that happened, look out! I was the king of reacting to situations with emotion and anger.

If you hit me, I was going to hit you harder. If you said something to me, I was going to yell louder or be more sarcastic. No matter what, I was going to top whatever you did to me.

The result: I hurt the wrong people (those who actually cared about me), I hurt too many people (just about everyone I knew), and people stopped hanging out with me (I ended up being a loner). The reality: I had to learn to respond, not react. Whether it was my parents putting me in the middle of their divorce, my teachers disrespecting me in front of my friends, or a girl cheating on me, I had to learn to take a moment, calm down, and respond to the situation with logic and common sense.





5 THOUGHTS ABOUT AUTHORITY

10. EVERYONE HAS TO SUBMIT TO SOME KIND OF AUTHORITY

We like to make decisions. We were created with free will, which means we were created to make decisions. If we're honest, sometimes we wish we could just do whatever we wanted to do and not have to worry about the consequences. But we know it's not that easy because every choice has consequences. We will have to answer to someone in authority.

Regardless of your position or status in life, you will have someone in authority over you. It may be a parent, a teacher, law enforcement, a boss, or some other authority figure. Even the president has people that he (or she) must answer to and rules that have to be followed. Ultimately, we are all under the authority of God.



You may not like it, but we all have someone in authority over us. Our responsibility is to respectfully submit to authority. The sooner we accept that, the better we can understand how to live our best life.

11. OBEDIENCE DOESN'T ALWAYS EQUAL HONOR AND RESPECT

I (Matty) hated cleaning my dog's poop from our back door. For some reason my mom decided to train Taffy to do her business right in the doorway where our unexpected guests would be greeted with a fresh surprise whenever they walked into the house. While this never made sense to me, the fact that I as the boy of the family had to clean it up multiple times a day made even less sense.

It never failed that as I was getting ready to beat a level on Atari® (look it up online), Taffy would decide to take care of business. Without fail I would have to stop what I was doing (which I didn't want to do) to take care of the present she left me (which I *really* didn't want to do).

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BECOME A REAL MAN?

You'll find the best answer to that question when you follow God's roadmap—a journey that will lead you toward authentic manhood.

Jeffrey, Mike, and Matty have teamed up to offer some sharp advice on transitioning from the teen years to adulthood. They'll guide you through eight essential topics, including finances, dating & sex, spiritual growth & disciplines, and identity. You'll hear about their victories and successes—plus their regrets and mistakes.

These three guys are all dads who want their sons to experience a meaningful life by following and honoring God—and they want that for you, too.

99 THINGS EVERY GUY SHOULD KNOW will help you become a man whose life is filled with honesty, strength, and courage.



JEFFREY WALLACE has served in local youth ministry for over a decade and brings a fresh and relevant approach to effective and healthy Purpose-Driven urban youth ministry. He is the President & CEO of Front Line Urban Resources, Inc., which focuses on training and mentoring other urban youth pastors and leaders and providing life-changing youth ministry resources. He also serves pastor of youth development at Peace Baptist Church in Decatur, Georgia.



MIKE HAMMER is passionate about leadership, ministry, and people growing in who God has called them to be. With over a decade in ministry, he is currently a youth pastor for middle and high school ministries, as well as a writer and occasional speaker. He lives with his wife, Megan, and their sons, Logan and Parker—both named after superheroes. (Seriously, how awesome is that?)



MATTY MCCAGE convinced Joyce to marry him and a church to hire him. Matty has spent nearly 20 years in youth ministry, teaching the proper wedgie technique and regularly pontificating on MinistryRamblings.com. He and Joyce are living happily ever after with their three offspring: Aeden, Warren, and Emmalicious.



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