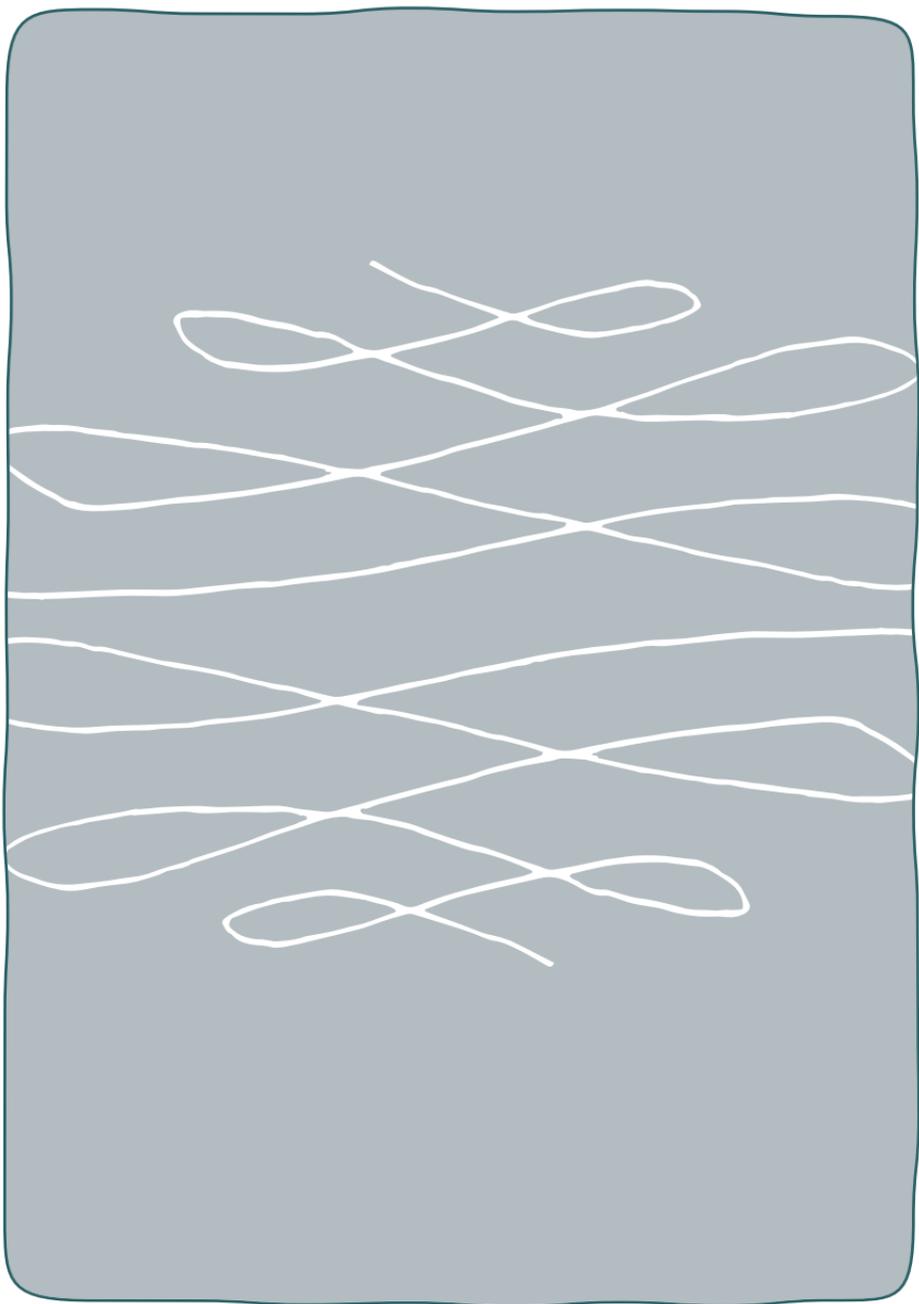


PART 1:

The
SEARCHING
(Doing It My Way)





the prayer that rocked my world

It was a desperate prayer I prayed that fall—that God would free me from my idols and teach me to trust Him with my love life. I don't know what I expected, but it certainly wasn't a punch to my gut that left me reeling with shock and my whole world spinning out of control. To say I didn't see it coming would be the understatement of the year. Had I known how God would answer my prayer, I'm not sure I would have had the courage to pray it.

While the light fixtures swung, the walls did the tango, and the evidence mocked, “Your God has purposefully been cruel to you,” deep down I knew the truth. This blow was a severe mercy.¹ Yes, it hurt—hurt so bad my tears didn't dry up for months—but I also knew God was answering my prayer in a way that would ultimately bring healing and freedom.

But I'm getting ahead of myself.

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I Want Off!

The reason I prayed this bold prayer was that I wanted off my merry-go-round ride that never stopped its perpetual spinning. It went something like this:

1. Spot a cute boy (we'll call him Boy A).
2. Dream about Boy A.
3. Do whatever it takes to make Boy A notice me.
4. Even though Boy A doesn't pursue me, hang on to my dream of Boy A until he (a) moves to the North Pole with no access to a cell phone or computer, (b) dies and is buried or cremated, or (c) begins dating another girl.
5. Mend my broken heart by hating Boy A and finding another cute boy (Boy B).
6. Replace Boy A with Boy B.
7. Dream about Boy B.
8. Make sure Boy B notices me.
9. Hang on to my dream of Boy B until he . . .
10. Move on to another cute boy—Boy C.

The truth is, I went through an entire alphabet—and more—of boys over the years.

Early Beginnings

I was ten years old when I first wrote about a boy in my journal. It didn't seem to matter that his last name was Roach, or that he came in and out of my life one short afternoon. I wrote, "*Dear*

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*Diary, today I really got to know *Nick Roach! I really like him! I wouldn't ever tell him that!"*

Nick Roach wasn't the first boy I noticed. A couple of years earlier I had lain in bed night after night praying, "God, please let me marry Chadwick Chandler Chadderdon. Please let me marry Chadwick Chandler Chadderdon." (If you like tongue twisters, try that one on for size!) I don't remember much about Chadwick, except that he had blond hair, lived on a farm, and was in my Sunday school class.

As the years passed, my "cute, innocent crushes" became more and more frequent—and more and more costly.

But it didn't look that way at first. In high school, my friends thought I was hilarious because I'd pretend I was in love with the most unpopular guys in school. We nicknamed one guy Jello (because of the way his stomach jiggled), and we sent notes back and forth laughing about how much I liked Jello.

If my friends and I had known where my boy craziness would take me, though, we wouldn't have laughed. I was about to experience Psalm 16:4: "The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply."

"Little g" Gods and the "Big G" God

I should explain: I wasn't running after one of those fat, little, golden idols. A friend once described a god, or an idol, to me this way: an idol is something that, without it, you think you'll face a "hell"—your own personal version of torment and pain. But with your idol, you think you'll be saved from that hell. Whatever you think will save you from your "hell" is your idol.

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Have you ever thought about what your “hell” and idol are? Most of us have more than one, but my main idol was a boyfriend. I thought it would save me from the hell of not being loved.

An idol, or a “little g” god, is a dangerous thing and will always disappoint us. That’s because it’s a cheap substitute for the “big G” God, the one we were made by and for. This “big G” God is our Creator and the King of the entire universe. Not a cruel, capricious king, but a kind and just King.

In the beginning everyone and everything was subject to the King. But then one of the King’s servants decided *he* wanted to be king. Ever since that day he has been leading a rebellion against the King. You may have heard of this servant. His name is Satan. Whether you know it or not, you are now caught up in this cosmic clash—the King desiring (and deserving) your wholehearted love and submission, and Satan wanting nothing more than for you to rebel against the King.

And most have rebelled against the King. When He sent His Son, Jesus, to earth over two thousand years ago, His people hatefully shouted, “We do not want this man to reign over us. . . . Crucify him, crucify him!” (Luke 19:14; 23:21). So they did. Some, though, said, “Truly this was the Son of God!” (Matthew 27:54). And because He was, death couldn’t keep Him down. He rose from the dead and returned to the throne room of heaven.

The King of Kings

In Revelation 19:11–16 we’re given a sneak peek of Jesus’ soon return to earth to destroy His enemies and set up His kingdom for good. Read about it for yourself:

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I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems [crowns], and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

Did you catch that? Jesus is the King of kings. It doesn't get any higher than that. Jesus is the greatest. The highest. The bestest. (Sorry, I know that's not a word, but I just had to.) As the King of kings, He deserves our fear, our obedience, our honor, and our celebration.

But instead of loving and worshiping the King of kings, I gave my love, worship, and affection to a "little g" god: boys. You'll get to read all about that in the following chapters. But first, let's talk about you.

Your Turn: Take the Boy-Crazy Quiz

Can you relate? Let's stop for a minute so you can take the Boy-Crazy Quiz and find out how you rate. Simply circle yes or

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no to answer the following fourteen questions. I'm going to make a quick cup of chai while you're working on it. See you in a few!

1. In a room full of people, do you always know where "he" is? (yes / no)
2. Are boys your number-one favorite topic of conversation with your friends? (yes / no)
3. Do you often dress to catch a guy's attention? (yes / no)
4. Do you replace one crush with another almost as soon as you realize the first relationship is not going anywhere? (yes / no)
5. Have you asked a guy out? (yes / no)
6. Do you have your eye on more than one guy at a time? (yes / no)
7. Do you believe you'd finally be completely happy if you had a boyfriend? (yes / no)
8. Do you change your schedule or plans in order to bump into him? (yes / no)
9. Do you tend to have more guy friends than girlfriends? (yes / no)
10. When you're relaxing with a good book, movie, or song, do you pick those that are filled with ooey-gooney romance? (yes / no)
11. If you journal or pray, are your pages or prayers filled with thoughts and requests about guys? (yes / no)
12. Are you always trying to figure out which guys like you? (yes / no)

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13. Would you be willing to get a total makeover for a guy? Not the hair, makeup, and new clothes kind, but the “I’ll change who I am at my core if that’s what it takes to get you” kind? (yes / no)
14. Anything I’ve missed? If so, write it here:
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If you answered yes to any, several, or all of those questions, then keep reading—this book is for you!



YOUR JOURNAL CORNER

Is your life more marked by submission to or rebellion against the King of kings? What “little g” god are you living for, and what personal version of “hell” do you hope your idol will save you from?



* Many names and details in this book have been changed to protect the privacy of others.