QUESTIONS FOR ALL OF YOUR ANSWERS

SINGLE

DATING

FRIENDSHIPS

& ROMANCE

A 40-DAY DEVOTIONAL BY HEATHER FLIES & TONY MYLES

PUBLISHED BY YM360

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Here are a few things you need to know to make this book meaningful for you.

Make This Book A Priority

Pretty much every Christ-follower, no matter how old they may or may not be, struggles to spend meaningful time with God every day. If you're going to learn from this book and be impacted by it, you have to decide that it's important to you. The truth is that you really can learn and grow from reading this book. But it has to matter. So, commit to spending at least 5-10 minutes each day with this book.

Have Your Bible Open

Resist the urge to ignore the spots where this book will tell you to read a passage of Scripture. This book is only a guide for THE Book (your Bible). The spiritual growth and the close relationship with God that you want only happens by reading and doing what's in the Bible. So have your Bible or a Bible app open and a pen or pencil available as you go through this book.

The Book Is Designed To Help You Stick With It

This devotional study through singleness, dating, friendships, and romance was designed to be completed in 40 days. You can either split it up into 8 five-day weeks and skip the weekends or go through it in 40 straight days. Whichever way you decide to go, you'll read a question, some Scripture, and a short devotional every day. After that, each day will provide you with an interactive activity for honest reflection and prayer prompts to guide you in responding to what you learn. There's also plenty of space on each devotional to journal your thoughts, jot down things from that day's study or Scriptures that stuck out to you, and note any follow-up questions you might have.

What If I Miss A Day of Reading? Or Three?

Don't give up! Take this at your own pace! The goal is your spiritual growth and for you to grow closer to God. If you miss a day or two . . . or four . . . don't throw in the towel. Instead, pick this book back up and start where you left off. You can do this!

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Nice To Meet You!

This intro is going to take you, like...five-ish minutes to read. You in?

First...can we let you in on a little secret?

We're not complete experts on what's in this book.

Hang out with us, though, because we have been teachable students of all of this for a long time. We still are.

No one knows the exact right "formula" for what it means to be your age and be single, or what to do when you like someone, or if dating is right/wrong for you, or if you should spend gazillions on fancy clothes so you can go to the next big dance, or if you should make your date homemade lasagna, or...you get the idea.

There's a lot of advice floating around on all of this, though, right? People of all ages all around you, online and in celebrity culture, are probably telling you to do "whatever makes you feel happy." In response, other well-meaning people are likewise telling you to *not* do what all those first people are telling you to do.

We've seen this play out for years. For a while (in something called "the nineties"), it seemed like the ultimate Christian love life thing to do was to sign a pledge saying you wouldn't have sex until you were married. That is a fantastic commitment because it does save something uniquely special for your future spouse (assuming you get married one day, which not everyone does).

Only...what about all the other stuff?

Like, is it okay to hold hands with...or hug...or cuddle with...or pucker up for...a special guy or girl who makes your heartbeat sound like a tough car driving around with the bass turned up?

Or, when could (or should) you use the "L-word" (no, not lasagna) to describe your feelings for someone (or lasagna)?

And is it healthy or not to secretly wonder about marriage when you're on your first date? What if they want to start publicly talking about baby names on your first date? (Psst... run, just run...unless they're going into the baby-naming business one day professionally. If so, you can just sort of jog away as you politely clap about their weird job choice.) Can we let you in on another little secret?

We're not going to just answer these questions for you. That would be just us being another voice in your life telling you "what" to do without helping you know the "why."

Yes, we'll talk all about some of the AMAZING answers that God can share with you throughout the Bible on all of these topics. Those answers are there, often contained in the details of flawed people who sometimes got it all right and other times got it all wrong. It's just that before we show you those answers, we're going to help you understand the questions...not just the ones you're asking, but the questions under those questions that are even better to ask.

We're Heather and Tony, by the way. Nice to meet you! You pronounce our last names, Flies and Myles, as "Fleece" and "Miles" (which sounds like a buddy-cop action movie, doesn't it?).

We've worked with middle school, high school, and college students over the years (and all their parents, by the way) and have personally seen some healthy and tragic stories when people we cared about made decisions one way or another about their singleness, relationships, affection, temptations, and more.

We've also spent oodles of time working on practical and timely teaching to help teenagers and young adults tackle all of this. Some of our amazingly smart friends we enjoy learning from will let you in on their wisdom throughout this book, too.

The most important of those friends, by the way, is God Himself. Seriously. We're going to bring you right up to connecting with Him through every devotional because one day, you'll put this book down (after you've read it hundreds of times and bought thousands of copies for your friends so you can all go through it together – we thank you in advance for that, by the way).

God, though? He's with you in every moment of every day of every week of every month of every year. He loves you, has breathtaking purpose for you, fights for your best, and has taken the time to write so much down for you...because you don't have to guess at life, singleness, and love when you surrender to God and let Him personally lead you through it. This book will work best when you write in it. Circle stuff that stands out to you. Scribble in answers in the spaces we've created for you to figure some things out. Show ideas that stand out to you to people around you so they can start asking better questions, too. Bottom line: don't just read everything. Wrestle with it.

That's how you get stronger...by wrestling with stuff. It's also how you can become a professional wrestler, probably. If you do, you can even pick out a super tough name for yourself, like..."Lasagna."

We're on this journey with you!

Together,

Heather Flies Tony Myles

CAN YOU BE TRUSTED WITH A PEN?

You may have a pen in your fingers right now. If not, maybe you recently did. Are you the type of person who treats a pen for what it was meant for? You know, like... you write stuff with it, and then you put it down, and then you pick it up when it makes sense to use it again, and so on?

Or are you more likely to (maybe without thinking about it) clickity-click-click it, or pick around at it, or stick it in your mouth, or bite it while you think...and then you look down and see your nasty drool or teeth marks on it, and think, "Ugh! This is gross. I need a new pen that doesn't look like it was tossed into a ball pit of toddlers at Chuck-E-Cheese." But then you sort of just start gnawing and abusing that next pen.

Oh, and have you ever had a pen randomly fall apart or maybe even explode on you? And you think, "Well, this is horrible. What fool made this pen so ready to just break down on me?" Maybe it was actually you, or it may have been someone else who damaged it, and you were just the next person to grab it.

The point is, do you think you can be trusted with a pen?

Yes No What's a pen? Is that an app on my phone?

Why? (Seriously, answer this. Write it out, you know, with a pen or something.)

And then, what do you sense God wants you to notice in this verse?

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Proverbs 1:7)

The reason we mess things up, whether it's our singleness or a relationship, is we're not accustomed to waiting. We get bored, so to speak, and click the pen. We end up doing things that aren't good for us, or we do them out of step with God. When vou don't wait for something that's good, problems arise. In fact, you might obtain that thing and realize it's actually not good for you or that you weren't ready for it... but if you had waited, you could have seen that and avoided the trouble to begin with. - Adam, 23

With that in mind...

Do you think you can be trusted with being single?

Do you think you can be trusted with a relationship?

Do you think you can be trusted with being alone with someone you're incredibly attracted to?

"Clickity-click-click."

Or, are you the type of person who treats singleness, relationships, and being alone with someone you're incredibly attracted to for what each of these is meant for?

We just read that the fear of the Lord (meaning to live in awe, respect, and honor of Him in all His great glory, power, purity, holiness, majesty, and so on) is the beginning of knowledge. Your Bible may say "wisdom" instead of "knowledge."

Notice that it doesn't say that knowledge/wisdom is found in fearing the worst but still embracing what you think is best. Like, you get more out of a pen, not when you do everything you can with it right up to the point that it breaks, but when you are teachable and humble about what the pen is designed for.

That may not be the kind of advice you're being given by others, though, about dating, flirting, exploring, and more. Your friends may just be trying to cheer you on when they tell you to "go for it" with some guy or girl who's into you...and they think it's just fine to "clickity-click-click" as long as you can, but then...of course...the whole thing just falls apart, and maybe even breaks.

Be aware, though, that simply being moral isn't the answer either. Lots of well-meaning Christians have made pledges, created challenging routines, worn rings/bracelets, and done more to nudge themselves forward spiritually. Such things can be valuable as secondary things, but they can't be your primary focus because you're utterly incapable of being righteous in your own strength. Even an accountability group where you share your journey with others will only go so far if its theme is, "What's the worst sin you committed this week, and why did you commit it?" The purpose of a pen, and the purpose of your life, is to be placed in the hands of the Author. You can try to fight the heat of lust with cold showers or just white-knuckling through it, or you can embrace the warmth of God's presence and the refreshing words He speaks into you through a relationship with Him. He doesn't just invite you to live according to His wisdom and His knowledge but through His Holy Spirit inside of you.

Ask God what He'd like you to be open to when it comes to singleness and relationships.

Write out a prayer about it right here...it doesn't have to be long, but it does have to come from a genuine place inside of you.

As you do, maybe let that pen you're writing with be a symbol of your life in His hands. Share your heart and ask Him some questions so He can share His heart with you. Be open.

What does God want to trust you with?

WHY NOT DEFINE IT?

That's a great question, isn't it?

Imagine a world where everything and everyone had pop-up labels you could read simply by looking at the object or person. Sure, it might feel weird...but think about how helpful that could be!

You'd look at a random dog, and the pop-up would say, "Friendly to pet!" or "About to puke! Run!"

You'd see a plate of fries at home, and the pop-up would tell you, "Go ahead and sneak one," or "If you touch this, your brother will squirt ketchup on your head."

You'd look at a potential friend or date, and the pop-up would reveal, "This person loves God and will absolutely add to your life," or "This person is creepy. Smile, but quickly turn around and walk away."

What if you were the only person in the world who had this ability?

What if you were the only person in the world who *didn't* have this ability?

Ooooh...did that just unlock a fear? Maybe we avoid defining things so others won't define us. We might be hesitant to say someone's a "best friend" if it means we can't equally hang out with other friends. Maybe we avoid saying, "This is my boyfriend/ girlfriend" because of the expectations that hints at. Saying "I'm single" could imply failure in the dating world, and so we sidestep that topic, too.

That's where phrases like "situationship" sprouted. This refers to when a guy and girl regularly hang out and enjoy each other, but neither wants to call it dating. They want the benefits without the risk or commitment. Why does this concept even exist? Who invented it? Why?

Language matters. The source of the language matters more, though.

Labels can be a good thing to help define limits, but placing a label on everything. Take time to pray about not only romantic or potential romantic relationships, but family and friendships as well. This is when growth and maturity begins. - Elyse, 20

In our imaginary pop-up world, something we'd have to eventually ask is who's supplying the information for the pop-ups? What if it was a random kid? What if it was an old woman? What if it was your 3rd-grade P.E. teacher? What if it was you? What if it was God? Our music, movies, TV shows, reels, and more all try to put a label on what they are. Who's behind those pop-ups? Should they be?

Why not define who gets to define it? Isn't that an even better question? And how does it all relate to singleness, dating, friendship, and romance? Consider this:

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)

God is the Creator of everything. It makes sense that He would be the One who defines what's what, right? If so, how do you feel about God having the final say on everything? Write about that. Define it.

Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature... the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it. (Genesis 2:7, 15)

The first human was alone with God AND had a purpose. God later said that human relationships did matter, but that doesn't cancel out what's here: your relationship status with others doesn't determine your value...your relationship status with God does. What will you personally claim about this? Define it.

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. (Genesis 2:18-19) This seems odd, doesn't it? God says out loud that it's not good for Adam to be alone, but He doesn't immediately make Eve. Why not? Why did He want Adam to observe the animals and work his job first? If you had to guess, what would be your guess? Define it.

So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man He made into a woman and brought her to the man. (Genesis 2:21-22)

God could have created Eve with Adam awake and watching, and yet He didn't. Instead, He had a private moment with Eve before bringing her to him. Why might this have mattered to God? What does this mean in your life? Define it.

Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:23-25)

Adam gets poetic after seeing Eve and realizing she's his wife. What do you think about this? Define it.

The great thing about doing this type of exercise is that now you can more intelligently define singleness, dating, friendship, and romance.

- What if being single means something is right...not wrong?
- What if the purpose of dating is to add to the lives of others?
- What if friendship is how God spreads kindness?
- What if romance is a spiritual thing?

Once you figure that out, keep it going. Ask God more questions, like what counts as a date? Is that fun person you text for hours every day your boyfriend/girlfriend? What does it mean to be a better friend? Sure, it might feel weird...but try to understand how helpful that could be.

What if you didn't have to fear labels anymore but discovered tremendous freedom in defining everything in life from God's perspective?

WHAT IF "THE ONE" ISN'T THE ONE YOU'RE THINKING OF?

Most teenagers fall into two groups—those who love math and those who have struggled since the multiplication table was introduced in 2nd grade. Whether you revel in taking college-level math courses or can't wait until you meet the minimum math requirement, there's one formula you need to memorize and implement if you want to be successful in relationships.

Romantics encourage the idea that when you find the right person, that person completes you and makes you whole. This philosophy might make you feel soft and warm inside, but it doesn't play out well in life. And it certainly isn't biblical.

If you had to put this philosophy into a mathematical formula, it would be $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2} = 1$. Sure, this works when learning simple fractions, but not when forming a healthy dating relationship! How effective is it to choose someone who meets your needs and wants when your needs and wants change on a daily basis? How smart is it to choose someone that matches who you are today when you will be a different you within three months?

Let's leave that formula in your textbooks and look to Biblical Math for a better option. According to Scripture, the winning equation for a God-honoring relationship is 1 + 1 = 1.

1 WHOLE, HEALTHY PERSON + 1 WHOLE, HEALTHY PERSON = 1 WHOLE, HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP

How can this be?! In the beginning, God had a big reveal party with creation. He rolled out breathtaking sunsets, majestic mountains, and crashing ocean waves. He went big and added giraffes, hippos, and sloths. But He waited until the very end to make His best creation – us.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:26-27)

As humans, we were created in the image of the God of the Universe. Let that sink in for a minute. So many qualities that God carries in Himself were infused into us as we were created—compassion, creativity, intellect, reason, and the desire to be in relationships. If you need more proof of our individual wholeness, read Psalm 139:13-16. David writes to be sure we understand we are created with purpose and on purpose.

As an individual, if you are in Christ, you are whole and complete, lacking nothing. Right now. You don't need anything or any person to complete you. You are already complete. A romantic relationship is simply a bonus, an extra from God to add to your already fulfilled life.

If you want to be in a healthy relationship, your first step is to live in that wholeness. Work on being the best 1 you can be. Be confident in who God has made you to be. Celebrate your uniqueness. Be comfortable in your own skin. Like yourself.

You know plenty of your friends who have not attended to step one. Instead, they seek to find someone that makes them feel whole, complete, confident, and liked. You also know that it never ends well. Most young adults will need to spend a solid amount of time on step one, usually more than they want to.

The second step, which can seem as intense as step one, is to find someone who is doing the same kind of self-work. Another passionate follower of Jesus who sees himself or herself as whole and complete, lacking nothing.

When you add these two intentional 1s together, you will meet the goal of "1 whole, healthy relationship." A relationship with Jesus at the center (not based solely on physical attraction), bringing out the best in both, and honoring all involved. (And you don't even need a calculator!)

As you reflect on this new formula, take a moment to journal your thoughts on each of these three elements. What does it look like to have Jesus at the center, bring out the best in someone else, and honor everyone involved?

HOW FULL IS YOUR CEREAL BOWL?

Do you like it when your parent answers "Yes!" to your requests?

Can I go to the movies tonight? Yes! Can I have money from you to pay for the movie?

Yes! Can we get a puppy? Yes! Can I take the car tonight? Yes! (*Disclaimer: This can only be a legit yes if you're a licensed driver; otherwise, there are some legal issues!) We don't know of any teenager who hasn't loved it when a parent says "Yes!" to a passionate plea! But we also know that teenagers don't think it happens often enough... What if it could happen more? What if you could actually influence how often your parents respond positively to your requests? Would you be willing to do what it takes on your end?

It's all about trust. If your parents trust you, they're more likely to give you a yes. If they trust that what you say is true...if they trust you'll be where you say you'll be...if they trust you'll do what you say you'll do (without them having to remind you five times!), they're more likely to give you a yes.

And despite popular belief, trust is not a right. It's a privilege. Trust is something that needs to be earned and kept. So, how are you doing at earning and keeping your parents' trust?

Earning trust can look like this:



The empty bowl represents the trust you have with your parents. The bowl filled with yummy, sugary cereal represents all the opportunities you have to earn the trust of your parents. With each trust opportunity you take, you add to the trust bowl.

Circle four actions you could take this week to earn the trust of your parents:

- Getting yourself out of bed in the morning
- Walking the dog (AND picking up the poop!)
- Putting your dishes in the sink or washer
- Asking "How can I help?"
- Being kind to your siblings
- Answering their texts right away
- Saying thank you for rides, food, and a roof over your head
- Keeping your room clean (or cleaning it for the first time in your life)
- Agreeing to their screen time rules
- Owning a mistake and saying you're sorry

Each time you choose to do one of these actions, you're adding to the trust bowl. Just for fun, make an arrow from the full bowl to the empty bowl and draw some cereal in that trust bowl. With every positive choice you make, you add to the trust bowl. Here's the truth: Life with a full trust bowl is a good life! It always has been—check out this verse from the Old Testament:

Honor your father and mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. (Exodus 20:12)

It's the first commandment in the Bible with a promise—there's got to be something to that! Why do you think God did it that way?

Here's the cool thing about committing to filling the trust bowl with your parents—it doesn't just benefit you. It honors your parents, pleases God, and makes life better for everyone.

ASK GOD WHAT IT WOULD LOOK LIKE FOR YOU TO HONOR YOUR

FATHER OR MOTHER TODAY. It might start with asking for forgiveness from God and your parent for the times in the last few weeks you haven't been honoring. Then, be open to what God might show you and write it down here.

WHAT NEEDS TO STOP AND WHAT NEEDS TO START?

God gave humans five senses to interpret life. They're all great, but most people have their favorite. Rank your favorite senses from 1 to 5:

____ SIGHT ____ HEARING ____ TASTE

____ SMELL

___ тоисн

Senses are intended to help us enjoy life as God intended. For fun, add your favorite "good" thing that helps you enjoy each sense. Under "smell," you could write "cookies in the oven" or "freshly mowed grass." Beneath "sight," you might write "Grand Canyon" or "sunset over the ocean."

Our senses absorb so much every day! Sometimes, what we take in is beyond our control, like when you walk into the ripe smells of a locker room during P.E. Still, we usually do have quite a bit of control over what we see, hear, taste, smell, and feel. Even if something is offensive, you can choose to remove yourself from it or focus your attention away from it.

What we allow our senses to experience matters to God.

- What you listen to matters to God.
- What you look at matters to God.
- What you speak about matters to God.
- What you choose to touch matters to God.
- What you take into your lungs matters to God.

This isn't because God is obsessed with stifling your life with rules. It matters to Him because what you take in from the outside impacts you on the inside. You may not want to believe that, so think about the last time you swallowed some bad chicken, nasty taco meat, contaminated veggies, or a pepper that was hotter than you thought. You ate it (not understanding it was bad), and something happened inside your stomach (which made you clearly understand that it was "bad").

Now, consider how when you eat healthy food it strengthens you. Generally, our bodies respond differently to fresh fruit than processed carbs. What goes in either fuels us or fattens us.

Jesus talked about this value during His famous Sermon on the Mount:

The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! (Matthew 6:22-23)

So, are your senses bad? Not at all! Your senses are great, God-given tools, but when you misuse them, you can slip into bad territory.

Tracking so far? We're about to level up this conversation.

When you're a tween or teen, your body, mind, and feelings are on overload, all while you're also being given more freedom about what you want to focus on. That kind of independence is exciting, so you might start making your own music playlists, choose apps for your phone, taste your way to a new favorite Boba Tea, set up a Netflix watchlist, throw on a new wardrobe, or buy a particular scent for your underarms (ew, but true). It can be incredibly fun to broaden what your senses take in.

The catch? How we explore our senses also affects others. Maybe you've seen teenage guys randomly dogpile on each other to get out some energy, or some teenage girls hog a camera to get the perfect picture. Again, this can be innocent fun...or really frustrating to others.

Take that same value further. What happens when a friend puts their dirty feet up on your bed? How do you handle someone in a dating relationship who wants to be hugged *all* the time? What do you do when someone you value wants to show you explicit photos or porn? Can you say for certain how you'd respond if a person you're really into wants to kiss you...and kiss you longer...and get you to lie down as they kiss you...and keep letting their senses have their way?

What needs to stop, and what needs to start? God wants to help you figure that out:

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. (Galatians 5:16-17)

Living by the Spirit means you don't live by a moral code that you change based on the moment. Living by the Spirit means consistently operating out of your relationship with God inside of you. It might help if you ask Him some specific questions and consider His already-written answers:

• "GOD. WHEN IS SOMETHING A GREEN LIGHT?" God created you to be a relational person, so it's absolutely fine to express interest in someone. We do this by noticing him or her, looking into that person's eyes, and having a conversation. We then build the relationship through time, talks, and texts. Maybe we enter into that fun phase where we affectionately slap a buddy on the back or give a friend a side hug.

Amos 3:3 says, **"Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet?"** If our goal is to love God and express His kindness to someone, we're likely in the green zone. When our touches become about us, the light may be changing.

• "GOD. WHEN IS SOMETHING A YELLOW LIGHT?" When you see a yellow light in traffic, do you speed up or slow down? While some may hit the gas, the actual intent of a yellow light is to get you to slow down so you don't hit a red light. That may not be what you see or do, though.

The same is true spiritually – Ephesians 4:17-19 instructs you not to lose your sensitivity and floor it to "practice every kind of impurity." Likewise, Ephesians 5:3 adds, **"But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you."** What might that be in a friendship when someone tries to get you to drift away from God? What happens when dating turns to touching, kissing, or using the word "love" to accelerate the relationship – should it, or should you slow down so you don't hit a red light?

• "GOD. WHEN IS SOMETHING A RED LIGHT?" Marriage is incredible, and some things are only meant for it. If you're crossing lines sexually in any form of sex, it's an obvious red light. God's biggest teaching on this, though, isn't just "Don't have sex until you're married." Hebrews 13:4 spells out a deeper value: "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous." The takeaway? Honor marriage...and even the marriage bed.

So, might that also include sleeping next to each other? If you do that, how are you watering down the joy of cuddling in bed for the first time with your future spouse? Also consider Proverbs 6:27, which says, **"Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned?"** If you're trying to prove you can lay down next to someone you're attracted to without anything ever happening, you're ignoring this warning...and ignoring God's warning is an automatic red light.

Remember, the point of these questions isn't to grab the loudest morals in the room (even if that room is inside a church building). It's about being honest with God's desires for you, asking Him the questions, and studying what He's already said. When you do, you're bringing light into your body to fill you and reset your "sense" of things. Ask Him, even now, "How's my driving?"