

"If you're looking for a voice that tackles the tough stuff . . . you've just found it."

JORDAN LEE DOOLEY

CONFESSIONS

*Real-life talk about
all the things
Christians aren't sure
we're supposed to say—*

OF A

CRAPPY

*and why they
matter to God*

CHRISTIAN

Creator of @thegirlnamedblake

BLAKE GUICHET

FOREWORD BY JENNIFER ALLWOOD

If you have ever felt like you don't fit, like your personality or strong opinions are just too much for some people, you'll be encouraged by Blake's stories. God's love for you is perfect, even when following Jesus doesn't feel easy!

CANDACE CAMERON BURE, actress, producer, *New York Times* bestselling author

In *Confessions of a Crappy Christian*, my friend Blake Guichet shares insights that will help you see the beautiful truth that God's love and grace are the only currency you need—because in Christ you are enough. Let go of trying to rely on your own strength, your own power, and your own wisdom by truly understanding the freedom Jesus purchased for you. This book is power-packed with stories, biblical insights, and practical applications on how to quiet the voice of fear and live out a free and fulfilled life.

RASHAWN COPELAND, founder and CEO of Blessed Media, author of *Start Where You Are*

In a world where many Christians sugarcoat (or completely avoid) the real and hard conversations, this book is refreshing. Unafraid to go there, Blake candidly guides you through honest conversations on everything from healing to sex, and she shares stories, thoughts, and biblical insights in both a digestible and thought-provoking way. If you're looking for a voice that tackles the tough stuff . . . you've just found it.

JORDAN LEE DOOLEY, *Wall Street Journal* bestselling author of *Own Your Everyday*

This is THE book! With poetic precision, Blake dismantles all the ways hustle culture gets it wrong. Her words are a needed breath of fresh air in a world attempting to suffocate us with illusion and quick fixes. Her transparency and honesty are the balm we need.

BETHNY RICKS, speaker and faith-based leadership expert

In a world of homogenous writing, *Confessions of a Crappy Christian* breaks out with extraordinary humility and vibrant, evocative writing. Raw, at times anguished, and always honest, this book discusses life in all its messiness, with all its disappointments, but also celebrates its wonder and joy. Blake Guichet writes with the perfect mixture of grace and truth; she's a faithful and fun companion on the journey of being an imperfect believer serving a perfect God.

GARY THOMAS, author of *Sacred Marriage*

I'm so thankful for brave women who say the things that no one else will say. Blake is one of those women. I got sucked into this book the moment I started reading it. Blake's voice is fresh, real, bold, and so very needed. *Confessions of a Crappy Christian* will invite you to break free from the pressures of a polished and perfect Christian life and instead relax into God's goodness while enjoying being who He created you to be. You will laugh, cry, and let out a deep sigh of relief. You will feel lighter after reading it, and that's something we all need more of in our world.

CHRISTY WRIGHT, national bestselling author of *Business Boutique*, *Take Back Your Time*, and *Living True*

CONFESSIONS OF A CRAPPY CHRISTIAN

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Real-life talk about all the things Christians aren't sure we're supposed to say — and why they matter to God

BLAKE GUICHET

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Confessions of a Crappy Christian: Real-Life Talk about All the Things Christians Aren't Sure We're Supposed to Say—and Why They Matter to God

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*To every person who has ever been
told they are too much or not enough
by the people who should have
protected and encouraged them.*

*To the women bound up by something
that should have set them free.*

To the wild, brave, and free ones.

This book is for you.

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FOREWORD

I STILL REMEMBER when I found Blake Guichet (@thegirlnamed-blake) on Instagram. I was holed up in a hotel in Kansas City as I finished writing my own book. Possibly like you, I just stumbled upon her content when someone I follow shared one of her posts. That's one of the cool things about the internet, right?

I don't even remember the particular post, but I do remember that Blake was calling out "hustle culture" (which I love!), she was calling out bad theology (which is honorable!), and she was giving glory to God (yesss!).

And I thought, *This girl is one of my people.*

So I actually sent Blake a DM that day. And because she is cool and legit and understands the importance of relationship building on social media, she sent me a direct message back. And now, here we are a few years later, as RLFs (real-life friends). It's funny how God knows the people we need (and the books we need!) right when we need them.

I am convinced that Blake is one of those women whom *everyone* needs in their life. She is always in your corner. She's probably also someone you don't want to meet in a dark alley if you've wronged her or someone she loves. She loves Jesus and

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knows the Word of God. She's incredibly honest (and in today's world that is hard to come by).

I find myself shaking my head and whispering “yes!” at so many of the subjects Blake writes about on social media and in this book. She talks about the hard things. The areas a lot of us wish we had the guts to talk about.

And even if you disagree with her stance on a topic (which I do—I vehemently disagree with her on the hot topic of *Die Hard* being a Christmas movie—it is *not*), she will cause you to think. That in turn makes me dig deeper into why I believe what I believe. And isn't that a good thing either way?

From a personal standpoint, I've been going through a few years of God surrounding me with Enneagram 8s. (If you're one of those people who doesn't love the Enneagram, then just skip this paragraph.) As an Enneagram 3, I can often bend and go smaller and stay quiet in order to keep the peace and stay likable. And yet I can't step fully into who God has created me to be and simultaneously continue to fear what other people will think.

So cue Blake as yet another Enneagram 8 in my life (joining the ranks of my husband, my teenage daughter, and my mentor). I'm convinced God has surrounded me with these “gentle bulldozers” so I can get better at speaking truth with more boldness and clarity. Blake does this so well. She is the grown-up version of my fourteen-year-old daughter. And that gives me such hope when I think about the woman my girl will one day be.

Bold.

Passionate.

Sold out for truth.

Sure in her beliefs.

Confident in her calling.

Unafraid to speak her mind.

FOREWORD

And unapologetic about who she is.

No matter your personality type, Blake will firmly but gently help you find your voice too.

Social media is a brutal place a lot of the time, especially when you're talking about hard topics and having honest conversations that, quite frankly, a lot of Christians are not comfortable with. I've watched Blake navigate that with such grace and integrity. I've watched with so much admiration as she has grown into her role as an online influencer. Sometimes the spotlight can bring out the worst in people and shine a light on one's shortcomings. But Blake absolutely sparkles. That's what I love about this book: She models how to acknowledge and engage thoughtfully with the uncomfortable questions so many of us have when it comes to understanding ourselves, our work, and our relationships.

Blake knows she is already enough without getting accolades on social media. I love that she doesn't portray her life as Pinterest-perfect because whose life actually is? I love that she is so free to be exactly who God made her to be. I love that she shares her anxieties and struggles because it gives the rest of us permission to share our own. I love that she will say out loud what most of us are afraid to. And I love that she is a cheerleader for laying down our hustle and picking up God's best for each of us. Her conviction of whom she is working for and why she is working for Him is always evident.

If you are someone who struggles to fit in, or struggles in general, or if you are someone whose life has turned out differently from what you envisioned . . . you will love this book. If you are someone who is an Enneagram 8 or, like me, you need other 8s to make you bolder . . . you are going to love this book. And you are going to love Blake. You are going to love how she shows you how to navigate life, both in real time and on the internet, without

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apology and without hustle. It really is a permission-granting book. Not that either you or I need “permission.”

But I am convinced that God will bring people into our world at exactly the precise time to help us learn or see something that we need. I am convinced that God will often allow us to fight our own battles so that we are able to come back from the battlefield, lick our wounds, heal, and then build a ladder to let down for someone else. This book is Blake doing exactly that. It will encourage and inspire you to be and do exactly what God is asking of you.

*Xoxo,
Jan*

Introduction

WHY I CHOSE A CRAPPY— NOT A CURATED—FAITH

Some people just want to fight. Bless them with a block.

#2 OF “MY BEST (UNSOLICITED)

INSTAGRAM ADVICE,”

JUNE 13, 2020

I’VE GAINED AN ONLINE FOLLOWING largely due to my penchant for rocking the boat. For saying what people are thinking but are often nervous to say out loud. I’ve always been one to speak my mind, so I gravitated to online platforms early.

Though I posted my first photo to the site a year before my wedding, Instagram was barely on the scene when I married my husband, Jeremy. We didn’t even have a #wedding hashtag (although I know it would’ve been super witty if we had had one). By the time my babies entered the toddler phase, Instagram was beginning to form into what it looks like now—fewer heavy filters and no captions, more life and microblogs. As a child of the Xanga and LiveJournal days, I welcomed the opportunity to share my love of words with an internet audience and began filling my feed with images and honest takes on life as a young mom, wife,

and Christian. I love the immediacy of the medium: You can post images and ideas almost as quickly as they come to you and begin culling through responses and questions minutes—sometimes seconds—later.

Yet the more time I spent online, the more I found that the same issues plaguing Christian women in the real world— isolation, insecurity, FOMO—were exacerbated by our ability to curate our lives so they looked perfect on the internet. My struggles with mental health, friendship, marriage, and motherhood seemed nonexistent on Instagram, but I knew better. I was sure others were fighting the same battles I was; they just weren't talking about it. In an age when life is lived out in fifteen-second

internet microcosms, we're drowning in other people's highlight reels. We spend our days comparing what we have and who we are with what plays across our screens.

After a couple of years, I'd finally had my fill of picture-perfect Instagram

Christianity, which went no deeper than the stilted conversations I remember from my days in church youth group. I craved a reckless-abandon kind of authenticity, and I knew it was what other people needed too. I kept digging, searching for someone who was showing up in the trenches, and I found a few individuals, but not many. Not nearly enough voices were speaking into what I knew to be an epidemic of loneliness. So I decided to create a space for honest conversations.

The first episode of the *Confessions of a Crappy Christian* podcast debuted on my thirtieth birthday, December 10, 2018—the beginning of the wildest ride of my life. Out of my need for solidarity and vulnerability, a community of fellow crappy Christians has grown

IN AN AGE WHEN LIFE IS
LIVED OUT IN FIFTEEN-SECOND
INTERNET MICROCOSMS,
WE'RE DROWNING IN OTHER
PEOPLE'S HIGHLIGHT REELS.

INTRODUCTION

into the thousands. These women (and a few men) desire to boast in their weakness so that God's power can show itself to be perfect through it. These are people who don't need the world to think they've got all their crap together, who are free and wild to be who God created them to be while chasing down who He wants them to be. They're okay with their shortcomings but not from a spirit of complacent acceptance. They live out that blend of the already and not yet, knowing our Father has given us everything we need for life and godliness (see 2 Peter 1:3) without trying to conform to some weird "perfect Christian" box some in the church have set before us as the only option.

That's why, in the very first episode of my podcast, I pointed to the passage that has become a touchstone for my life. It's Paul's reflection on God's response when Paul asked Him to remove some unidentified difficulty:

Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9, NLT

That's really the crux of it, isn't it? Believing that grace is enough. Living from a foundational knowledge that grace is not only all you need, but also that it enables your weakness to be used for greatness and God's glory.

When the constraints of a curated life came crashing down, what I was left with was enough, even if I didn't always feel like it was. It came down to knowing I was okay. In all my mess, with all my flesh's proclivity for ridiculousness, God wanted me.

The world doesn't need more perfectly presentable Christians. It needs people who love Jesus and are willing to show up and say,

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“I can’t do anything on my own. There is nothing good in me apart from Christ, but with Him, I am unstoppable. With Him, I am more than enough and He empowers my every effort.”

Through the chapters to come, my hope is to invite you into the Crappy Christian family. Maybe you picked up this book because the title intrigued you—the idea that a Christian would call herself crappy piqued your interest. Or maybe you already identify as a crappy Christian but the fact that someone else would say the same surprised you. Perhaps you’ve been burned by religion and the indignant righteousness of Jesus’ followers but have never quite been successful at extraditing yourself from His love. Whatever the reason, my prayer is this: that when you finish this book, you will finally feel free. Free to be wild and brave and exactly who He made you to be without fear of failure or retribution.

As we journey together, I’ll be inviting you to engage with some tough questions about your identity, relationships, and faith. I’ll go first, wrestling with the powerful, yet often unspoken, messages from both the world and the church about how we should think and act. My hope is that by going first, I’m able to provide a safe space for you to address some of the sources of your anxieties and struggles, acknowledging that life is hard but God is good and loves you more than you can imagine.

The journey to living in freedom in Christ never ends. There are always more chains to be undone, lies to be eviscerated, and truths to be planted. I believe the Father walked me through the fire of living surrounded by lies so that I could come back with buckets of water for those still in the flames. That is my desire for this book, and for you. That you would be free from the bondage of religion, the burden of striving, the yoke of judgment, and the chains of fear.

All right. Let’s go get free.

Chapter 1

WHAT AM I CHASING?

*If I find in myself a desire which
no experience in this world can satisfy,
the most probable explanation is
that I was made for another world.*

C. S. LEWIS

IT'S THE SPRING after the birth of my second child, and I'm seated in the balcony of a little hip theater nestled in the outskirts of Los Angeles. The music is so loud my ears are starting to ring, but that's nothing compared to the energy buzzing through the women around me. There's something almost palpable in the air. I haven't been able to identify it yet, but if I'm being completely honest, I'm not sure I like it. All in all, I'm just excited to be here, seated next to my best friend at the time and far away from the responsibilities and general lack of personal space that consume my day-to-day as a stay-at-home mom. I'm here for a change. I'm here to finally hit play on my life after pausing it to be a full-time wife, mother, and homemaker. This is going to be the game changer.

Then suddenly there she is. The woman I've traveled two thousand miles to see. The woman who is going to help me finally

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find my purpose, chase my goals, and teach me how to live out the more I was made for. I push aside the small doubts and weird vibes in my mental peripheral and focus, pen poised above the cute notebook I've brought to fill with wisdom and insider knowledge. Whoops! First, it's time to dance. And jump. This isn't exactly my gig, but I'm here for the full experience, so I do my best to join in.

"Is this balcony shaking?" I yell in my friend's ear as I move my arms along to Beyoncé's "Run the World (Girls)," refusing to jump because, yes, the balcony is definitely shaking. *It's okay, it's all part of the experience.* After a few more songs and micro panic attacks on my part, because *For real, this balcony is going to come off the wall from the weight of all this jumping and dancing,* it's time to get to business. The things I want are within my grasp, and this woman is going to give me everything I need to finally grab them.

It feels appropriate at this point to tell you what the "it" I wanted was so that you can understand why I was standing in that balcony mob in the first place. I had decided I wanted to be an influencer. Okay, wait, don't put the book down yet. I promise I'm going to redeem myself from that admission. But it's important that you know where my head was at this time. I wanted to be Instagram famous, even though at the time I had fewer than a thousand followers and no momentum to speak of. But I had set my sights on internet fame as the capital *G* GOAL of my life. My intentions were embarrassingly shallow, looking for attention and money to fill holes in my life they would never fill, and I was doing everything I could to achieve my objectives. I truly thought a certain number of followers and a set income stream would fulfill me. Heck, I'd flown all the way to LA desperately hoping to find the secrets. But I was also extraordinarily tired. By the time I landed at LAX, I was six months into chasing this particular dream, and I was losing steam. Nothing was happening. People weren't pouring

WHAT AM I CHASING?

into my Instagram, my phone wasn't lighting up with calls to speak to stadiums packed full of people, and the tricks and tips that the internet gurus shelled out weren't working. In fact, they made me feel kind of gross.

And that's how I end up here, in a theater in Los Angeles, confident that this conference is the one thing I've been missing. I am prepared to let the references to Beyoncé as "our Lord and Savior" slide no matter how much they make my stomach flip. I furiously take notes through keynote after keynote. I post impactful quotes to my thousand Instagram followers so they know I am in the presence of greatness and hopefully can glean a tiny bit of knowledge from the fountain I am drinking so deeply from.

It's minutes into day two and we're jumping up and down to Macklemore & Ryan Lewis's "Can't Hold Us," and I have reached max capacity on jumping and dancing—if for no other reason than because I seem to be the only woman on this balcony who can tell it's about to come straight off the wall (#generalizedanxiety-disorder). I walk out and down into the lobby. It's empty because I'm the only idiot willing to miss even a moment of what we've paid tons of money to witness in that room.

And for the first time since my feet hit California earth, I talk to God, hurriedly throwing up a prayer: *Something is off, and I don't know what it is, but I know You're the only person I can tell about it. Can You help me discern what to take home with me and what needs to stay right there on the stage? Help me know and hear what You have for me and what's not mine to pick up. Okay. Amen.*

I wait until it sounds like the jumping has stopped and walk back to my seat. After that moment, though, I take notes just a little bit less energetically. I don't share any more inspirational quotes to Instagram, and I actually skip a few keynotes in lieu of spending time with some of the incredible women I meet there,

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most of whom I discover have started to feel strange about the experience themselves. It takes time for me to pull it apart and figure out why I feel the way I do, but then it hits me like a Mack truck. Everything about this experience has been about the speaker on stage and me. We exist in a vacuum where no one else and nothing else matters, only what we want. And all that has done is added toxic fuel to the already impressively self-centered goal I am in California to chase: to make my name great.

The moment I handed my dreams and desires over to the hustle, I was instantly faced with how small my dreams were in comparison to what those ahead of me have accomplished, and so I felt forced to inflate my goals to match theirs. No longer would it be good enough to write a book, it would have to be a *New York Times* bestseller. I wouldn't be satisfied with simply growing my following, I would need to be making money too. And again, none of this is inherently wrong, but at the rate I am going, fulfillment and satisfaction are always going to be just outside my grasp, and I know it. And I find it is an exhausting, defeating place to be.

LOOK AT ME

I've always wanted my voice to be heard (which I don't think is a bad thing). Since I was young, I've had something to say and wanted people to care enough to hear it. I basically came out of the womb wordy and loud, never allowed to sit next to my friends in grade school because you could set your watch by my teacher having to scold me for talking during class. Even as a child I loved to debate, rarely meaning to be disrespectful, but always wanting to understand—a character trait I'm sure my parents loved seeing emerge in their mouthy ten-year-old.

WHAT AM I CHASING?

I desired to be known and heard, to teach and equip, but somewhere along the way my God-given desires had gotten jacked up. I didn't want to speak up because I had something to say about Someone greater; I wanted to speak because I wanted people to look at me. It took a long time and a lot of undoing, but once it was finally enough to rest in who God is and who He says I am, the message came through loud and clear: *You're chasing the wrong thing*. I like how C. S. Lewis puts it in *Mere Christianity*:

Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing.¹

Neither earthly nor heavenly desires are immoral. In fact, I would venture to say God created us with them. We desire food because we are hungry. We crave sleep because we are tired. And we desire to be known and loved because God created us that way. He knows His presence, grace, and love are the only things that will ever meet our emotional needs because He put them there. The problem begins when we attempt to fit round, worldly pegs into the square, God-shaped hole inside of us. We think what we're chasing will give us what we so desperately want. As a result, we abandon the simplest, most beautiful answer: that God created

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humans with an ingrained need to feel known in order to draw us near to Him. Our desires aren't bad; it's what we pursue to quell them that can get us into trouble.

This tends to manifest differently in everyone, which makes sense since He created us so uniquely. Even though the answer to our longing is the same for all of us, how we search it out in the world can look very diverse. So your desire to be known maybe doesn't show up in your life the same way it has in mine. Maybe you don't resonate with a cross-country trip to LA chasing down fame.

It could be that you need close relationships to be seen and heard on an intimate level. It could be that you're asking too much of the people around you, hoping their love and attention will quiet your longing. Or you hop from friendship to friendship, viewing people as disposable—when you've gotten everything you can out of them, they're of no use to you anymore. Relationships are difficult because you're trying to use them to fill something no human, even at their best, will ever be capable of. Because you aren't convinced God *really* loves you, you are on the hunt for people who will. Relational intimacy isn't wrong, but if you think you have to chase after it, it won't ever satisfy.

Perhaps your need shows up as a desire to be recognized for your work and abilities. What you bring to the table proves your worth, and dang it, you *bought* this table and everyone is going to know it. Promotions and accolades are like crack to your hustling spirit, each *atta girl* like placing a flimsy Band-Aid over a screaming wound. If you're not working, then you're falling behind; rest is for the weak, and you won't stop until you reach the highest peak, and if you're being honest, it's most ideal if you're climbing it alone. You may long to hear God say, "Well done, good and faithful servant," but secretly you're afraid you'll finish the race,

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only to find out He's disappointed in you. If you run after being seen and known for your accomplishments instead of resting in the assurance that you are seen and known by the Creator, you're chasing the wrong thing.

Maybe you just need to feel okay. Safe, special, good enough, supported—all you want is to feel secure. You may temporarily find satisfaction in your job, family, friends, food, or working out. Maybe you discover a certain creative talent or natural ability to serve others, which momentarily fills the void and makes you feel fulfilled. But you know it won't last, so the hunt begins again, on to the next thing. You want so badly for God to show up in your life in a way you can feel and understand since He seems to do it for others, but never you.

Pick your poison. Chances are you know what you're chasing in hopes of fulfilling your deep, inherent need to be seen, known, and loved. Every single thing I did—every thought I had, every move I made—in that hustling season of my life, was an attempt to obtain and position myself as optimally for my benefit as possible. Obviously, that's super gross to admit out loud, but I think if we're honest, we all have a little bit of hustle culture in us. Maybe you're not quite as immersed as I was, or maybe you're drowning in it. But that God-created desire to be known and loved, the one intended to draw us near to Him so that He can abundantly and exceedingly pour out His goodness on us—that is the world's hunting ground. It preys on our God-given proclivities and exploits them for its gain. What the world has to offer is attractive. It's also smart. It hones in on whatever we think we lack, whatever we're chasing, and promises to fill in the gaps—something only God can do.

So there I sit (or stand, when the music is cranking) in the balcony, lonely and pursuing connection. The hustle tells me this

is where I'll find my lifelong friends—here within the economy of work. It's a girl gang, and there's someone in this room who can help get me and every other attendee wherever we're going! "Just look around! I promise there is a person here who fits your exact business needs, who can give you what you're looking for." (These are real things I heard at that Los Angeles conference; I wish I were fabricating.) The hustle guarantees that if I just follow this exact formula (only three installments of \$117!), I'll be more productive than ever before. It promises to teach me how to be the best, dominate sales, and climb the ladder of success. ("Oh, you don't have a job? It's time to get a side hustle.")

And those in the theater who came desiring fame are told that is within reach too. The message we hear is this: "You belong on this stage right next to the presenters, don't you know? And yes, being up here will provide everything you've ever wanted. It's time to stop apologizing for your ambition and get after it, girl!" We buy the books, attend the conferences, and make the "connections"—all in the name of self-betterment and growth, but in reality, we're hoping for so much more. And the hustle is telling you and me that it holds the key.

THAT GOD-CREATED DESIRE TO BE KNOWN AND LOVED, THE ONE INTENDED TO DRAW US NEAR TO HIM SO THAT HE CAN ABUNDANTLY AND EXCEEDINGLY POUR OUT HIS GOODNESS ON US—THAT IS THE WORLD'S HUNTING GROUND.

The problem is that the most successful lies always have a little bit of truth to them. You and I know that there isn't anything wrong with desiring connection or productivity. That God has no problem elevating the voices of those who will proclaim His name. But it's in that often-subtle shift that things go sideways. At first glance, the Pinterest perfect quotes and formulas seem fine. *You're right, other peoples' opinions of me don't matter*, we tell ourselves, fingering

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the pages of the newest guru's book. *I am enough. I was made for more.* Slowly and stealthily, the rally cries of the hustle integrate into our everyday thinking, quietly eliminating the truth in those thoughts—other people's opinions don't matter because of what Christ says about us. We're enough because God made us enough. The more we were made for is Him.

But because there's a little bit of truth in there, we forget why we started this journey in the first place. Our need to be known isn't satisfied; if anything, it's intensified. Because now that we're in the hustle's grip, what we're continually being told is that there's more than this pitiful, measly life we're living. Even though it lured us in with promises of fulfillment and enough-ness and success, the bar keeps moving, always inches outside of our grasp. Many of us are bleeding out, be it emotionally, financially, or physically. We're doing our darnedest to crawl across the finish line someone else told us to cross, refusing to acknowledge that maybe, just maybe, we've bought a lie and none of this is what we were promised. We're putting paper patches on a hole only God can mend (the paper is really pretty though).

Meanwhile, the God of the universe—the One who created neutrons and the aurora borealis and Brad Pitt—He's just waiting for you and me to come to Him. He knows He can satisfy every need we have. I imagine it grieves Him to watch His children chase acceptance by running into the arms of the world in the same way it pains us to see our kids make choices we know aren't good for them. We were made to be known by Him and in that completeness behave like beloved children who need nothing this side of heaven.

So there has to be a way to do this right. There has to be a path on which we can live out our days satisfied in Christ while acknowledging that we'll be faced with earthly desires that we can satisfy as well. I think finding that path starts by honestly

answering the question, *What are you chasing?* Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and ask yourself, *What am I running after; what is the number one thing?* Are you pursuing recognition? Comfort and safety? Numbers, titles, dollars? I'm not suggesting that honoring Christ and living in close connection with Him isn't in there somewhere because I'd venture a guess that it is. But is it *the* thing? Because if it's not, you've gotten it twisted, just as I did. You've already opened yourself up to distraction and derail-

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ment. Now here's the best news ever: There is no checklist to getting back to God being the main thing. There's no 12-step program, no waiting period, no scripted speech to recite. It's a simple shifting of our gaze.

LOOK UP

We've already been forgiven and called righteous, given everything we need for life and godliness (see 2 Peter 1:3). All He asks is that we live like it. And the reality is that we'll need to lay our motives and pursuits at the foot of the cross every day until the moment He calls us home. Our flesh wants to be the most important thing, but the new heart God has given us knows and desires to honor our Lord and keep Him first. It's easy, at this point in the conversation, to wax poetic about keeping the eyes of our heart set on Jesus. While I agree with that sentiment, I'm a girl who needs something to hold on to, something real and tangible that I can practice to help me keep Him the main thing. Just in case you like lists and tangibility as much as I do, I offer three questions I ask myself to keep my motives in check and ensure that God remains the most important thing I chase after:

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Whose glory am I working for?

For from him and through him and to him are all things.
To him be the glory forever. Amen.

ROMANS 11:36

The most efficient way for the enemy to deter you and me from doing the Father's work is to take good things and make them distractions. Your job, family, passions, and gifts are good things from God, through God, and for God—just don't miss that last part and make them for your glory. If you're doing the things God has put before you in order to make your own name great, you will start trying to do them out of your own power and find yourself always chasing after the next best thing.

I find it relatively simple to discern if I'm working for my own glory or for God's; it just takes a moment of introspection and brutal honesty with myself. Am I doing this because it's going to make me look good, elevate my name, and line my pockets, or am I doing it because it's the next right thing God is calling me to do to further the Kingdom and make disciples? Being honest about whose glory you're working for is the perfect recipe for quelling pride and striving because working for His Kingdom is the only thing that will ever satisfy.

Which of my relationships are most important to me?

Don't store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don't break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

MATTHEW 6:19-21

CONFESSIONS OF A CRAPPY CHRISTIAN

Okay, traditionally these verses are used around money and material possessions, but when thinking of relationships, I think it hits just as hard, maybe harder, for those of us for whom people hold much more weight than things do. I'm going to keep driving this point home—your close relationships are not bad. Your desire to have close relationships isn't something to be ashamed of. But are you more focused on storing up friendships and feeling loved by others than you are on furthering the Kingdom of God? Do you talk to your best friends about things before you talk to God about them? (Woof, self-imposed conviction on that one.) I have many a time been guilty of trying to squeeze life out of those around me, only to find myself exhausted and the other person disappointed. God is the only One who can fill those gaps for connection; everyone else is bonus.

How am I using my time?

Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk—not as unwise people but as wise—making the most of the time, because the days are evil. So don't be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

EPHESIANS 5:15-17

Paul was so intense, sometimes it makes me laugh. “The days are evil”? Dude, calm down. But then you take a look around and think, *Maybe Paul wasn't as intense as I thought he was*. Our time on earth is precious and numbered, and while it may sound like Paul is giving the biblical version of a YOLO here, I think he's less telling us to make the most of our days (not bad advice) and more reminding us to seize every opportunity to tell people about Jesus and glorify Him with our lives.

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That's not to say that we can't rest, relax, or do things that are just plain fun. You're never going to find me telling you that you have to keep your nose in the Bible, have worship music playing, or volunteer at your church every moment. Each is a good use of your time, but God gave us zip lines and sushi for a reason, you know? However, if you and I attempt to find life and happiness in fun activities rather than simply enjoying them as bounty of the Father's goodness, our motives are way out of balance.

Earth is God's playground, and I really believe He created it for His kids to enjoy. He designed us for relationships and community. He hardwired some of us with competitive natures to enjoy the thrill of business and entrepreneurship or athletic or musical endeavors. He gave some of us the gift of writing and speaking to share His message with the masses. He wants us to feel safe, secure, and accepted, but not by the world's definition—by His. All of these good things should drive us back to Him. Every single one. The methods and means may change, but at the end of the day, with clear eyes and full hearts (love you, Coach Taylor and *Friday Night Lights*), the drive behind what we do has to be only Jesus and His glory, all in hopes of drawing others to Christ so they can experience His love too.

That is the dream I want to chase. Understanding that, my friend, is the game changer.