

Stuff I'd Only Tell God

*A GUIDED
JOURNAL
OF COURAGEOUS
HONESTY,
OBSESSIVE
TRUTH-TELLING,
AND BEAUTIFULLY
RUTHLESS
SELF-DISCOVERY*

Jennifer Dukes Lee

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Dear You

Hello there, new friend.

My name is Jennifer, and I am about to become the nosiest friend you will ever have.

My parents tell me that one of my favorite words as a little girl was *Why*? At dinner parties, my friends get nervous when I lean forward over a table to ask, “So, can you tell me how you *really* feel about . . . ?”

I have always loved good questions, even making a career out of asking them as a news reporter.

I don’t ask questions to pry or to annoy people. I’m mostly just . . . curious. People are astonishingly interesting to me. *You* are astonishingly interesting to me.

We can learn a great deal by paying attention to whatever comes after the beautiful curve of a question mark.

Yet, for many years, I quietly struggled with a long list of questions that seemed unanswerable. It’s as if the answers were hidden in locked rooms with missing keys. They were questions about the universe, myself, stupid things from

my past, injustice, and the existence of God. They were the kinds of questions that kept me awake at night:

What's the purpose of my life?

Why am I the way I am?

How do I leave my past in the past?

Am I the only one this weird?

Will I ever be enough?

How can I do better tomorrow?

I began to look to God for answers, interrogating him in the same way that I interrogated police chiefs, presidential candidates, and unsuspecting dinner guests. What I found awakened me to the unrelenting love of God, who has never indicated a distaste for my questions.

Here's what I know to be true: life will never make sense until we get curious enough to ask good questions.

And so, I created this journal for you. In *Stuff I'd Only Tell God*, I pulled together daring, quirky, thought-provoking, silly, and soul-searching questions to ask yourself. It's the stuff I'd ask you if you invited me to a dinner party—and I'd invite you to ask them of me as well.

This journal will ask something of you, namely *courageous honesty and obsessive truth-telling*.

Honesty feels vulnerable and scary, like walking into a room without pants on. Honesty takes a special kind of courage, and ultimately, it holds a special kind of power. It is a form of intimacy with yourself—and with God.

That's why this journal exists: to give you a place for the most transparent truth-telling of your life. Think of it as your own little confessional booth.

Here, you will push your limits of vulnerability and self-reflection. You will plumb your own depths and your own history. You will understand what makes you tick—and what ticks you off. You will remember your past and reimagine your future. This journal offers you space to write down the stuff you believe to be true, and the “truths” you’ve reconsidered. It’s a place to record your ideas and memories and preferences that might seem outlandish or outrageous to someone else—but they’re the things that make you *you*.

Ultimately, this journal is a brand-new path in front of you. But this is more than a path to walk; it’s one to blaze. The adventure before you is one you are charting, with great personal courage—and with God, who is intimately familiar with the ways that you take.

High-level honesty can be a humbling thing, but this type of inner work will help you treat yourself more kindly, more empathetically. In the end, this beautifully ruthless work could change the way you feel about other people—and the way you feel about God, too.

Before you begin, you have an important question to ask yourself:

“Do I have the courage to write down the stuff I’d only tell God?”

Your yes might be the bravest yes you’ll ever give.

Before You Begin

Step 1: *Commit to ruthless honesty and generous compassion.* When you combine these two virtues, you end up with a more complete and charitable view toward yourself and others.

Step 2: *Choose your adventure.* This journal is structured in a particular order, starting with your people, because the people in your life have a tremendously powerful influence on your past, present, and future. The journal then guides you on a journey through your past, your right now, and your weird ways. Next, you deep-dive into your most protected secrets in the section titled “As Honest As I’ve Ever Been.” Finally, you’ll give yourself space to dream about what you want your future to look like, so you can make each day count from here on out. Feel free to start wherever you choose. *Just start.* This is your adventure.

Step 3: *Upon completion, determine what's next.* What will you do with this little book of secrets? You can hide it, bury it, burn it, trash it, papier-mâché it, mulch it, shred it, allow the dog to chew on it, rip it up, or put it in a time capsule with strict instructions that it not be read until 2052. Or, you might just feel emboldened enough to share the stuff you'd only tell God . . . with someone else after all.

Me and My People

You are the sum of a lot of things: your parents' DNA, your personality, your culture, your choices, your habits, your victories, and your struggles.

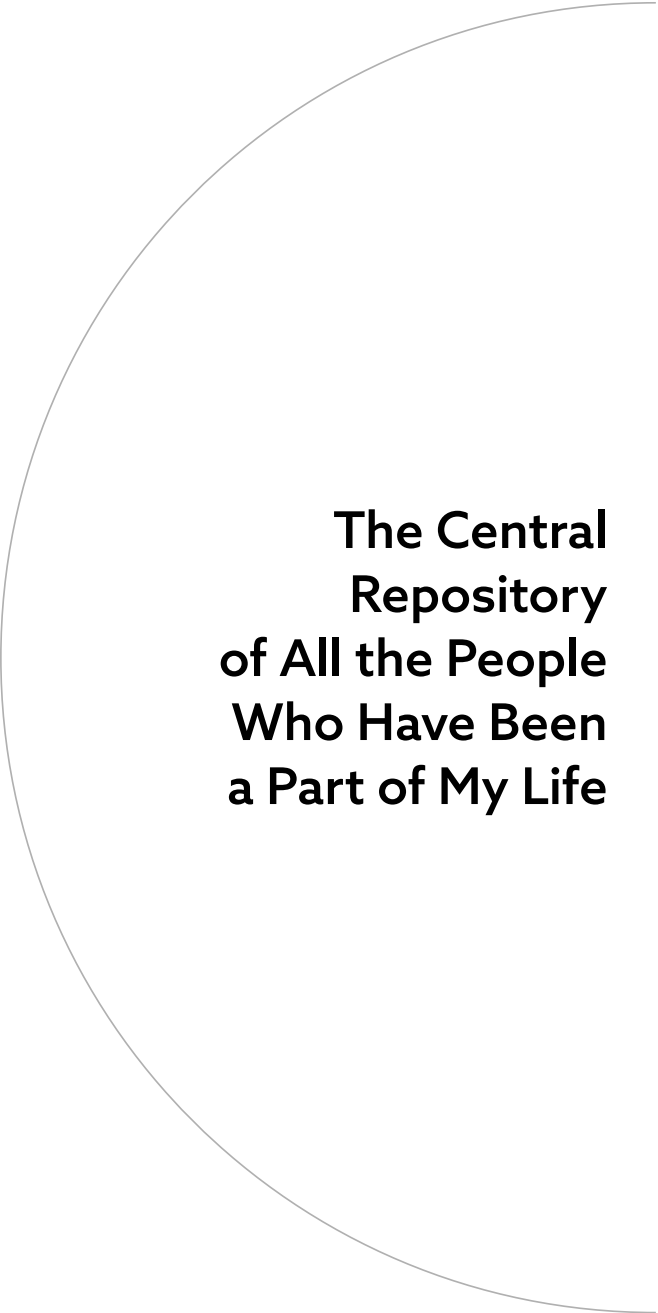
You are also shaped by every person who's been a part of your life, every person who's cared for you, every person who's hurt you, every person who's prayed for you, every person who's abandoned you, and every person who's loved you. Sometimes people are with you for a day, some are with you for a season, and some are with you for a lifetime. Each one leaves an imprint on the person you are becoming.

When you take time to think back on those souls, you can learn a lot about why you are the way you are. You can also learn a lot about the kind of human you want to be from here on out.

It can take a good bit of courage to encounter some of those people on the pages ahead, especially if they've hurt you, or if you can never see them again. But this exploration is part of your healing and central to your becoming.

As the faces and names emerge, some of them will bring you sorrow. And some will bring you unanticipated joy. You'll remember the way they made you laugh and how they looked after you. You'll remember the secrets you've shared, the promises they've broken, and the forgiveness that has brought you this far. Take a moment with each soul, remembering the mark they made on you and the mark you made on them.

These are your people.



**The Central
Repository
of All the People
Who Have Been
a Part of My Life**

The Central Repository of All the People Who Have Been a Part of My Life

Time for a brain dump. Fill these pages with every person you can think of who has influenced your life, for better or for worse.

My Class Yearbook Superlatives

Have you ever seen those pages in yearbooks where high school students voted for each other based on their various attributes? *Best hair. Most athletic. Most likely to succeed.* They're called "yearbook superlatives."

For a moment, let's say the people in "The Central Repository of All the People Who Have Been a Part of My Life" made up an entire high school class. Now it's your turn to assign the yearbook superlatives to the "class" that is your life. Your vote is the only one that counts.

Most Unique _____

Most Likely to be on a Reality Show _____

Most Likely to Ride a Mechanical Bull _____

Best Dressed _____

Most Misunderstood _____

Kindest _____

Most Humble _____

Most Likely to Pray for Me _____

Most in Need of Prayer Right Now _____

Human Encyclopedia _____

Most Likely to Cry When They Run Over a Turtle with Their
Car _____

Most Gullible _____

Most Likely to Shop at Walmart _____

Most Likely to Shop at Trader Joe's _____

Teacher's Pet _____

Has No Filter _____

Worst Driver _____

Someone I Could Bring Home to the Parents _____

Knows the Lyrics to Every Song _____

Biggest Hoarder _____

Most Likely to be Famous Someday _____

Hardest Working _____

Quirkiest _____

Most Environmentally Conscious _____

Most Imaginative _____

Best Problem Solver _____

Most Understanding _____

Biggest Potty Mouth _____

Best Laugh _____

Most Likely to Keep a Secret _____

Most Likely to Share My Secrets _____

Best Cook _____

Class Clown _____

Most Likely to Run Out of Gas _____

Most Unforgettable _____

Life of the Party _____

Who's got your six? WWI pilots came up with the phrase *got your six* in reference to the rear of an airplane—the six o'clock position. As a pilot, the six is what's behind you. It's the most vulnerable part of your plane. So, when someone tells you they've "got your six," it means they've got your back.

This is who's got my six

This is whose six I've got

This is who makes me laugh the loudest

No matter how long it's been, I can always pick up where I left off with this person

Right now, the person I trust most is

The two people I struggle most to love are

The best friend I've ever had is

The friend I miss most is

The person I can't wait to see when I get to heaven is

My most influential teacher was

These are a few people who make me feel whole

These are a few people who make me feel worthless

I smile every time I think about this person from my
childhood

These are four people I want to reach out to who I
haven't spoken to in a while

God loves everybody. I especially need to remember that
when I think about this person

This is who makes me cry sad tears

This is who makes me cry happy tears

This is who makes me cry mad tears

This is a person who turned out to be different than I originally thought (good or bad)

I understand God best because of these people

A person who understands God better because of me

I am looking out for the people in my life by

I can see how God was at work when he put this person in my life

LOST IN TRANSLATION

A beautiful feature of language is that it gives us the vocabulary to describe what we're feeling and a way to express ourselves with precision. The English language includes thousands upon thousands of words, but sometimes there isn't a perfect, succinct English word for what we feel. Our friends around the world are here to help. Here are some words for which there are no English equivalents, but you'll know exactly what they mean when you read the definitions, because you've probably experienced them. You'll find a few of these "Lost in Translation" sections throughout this journal, starting here:

***Retrouvailles*, French**

Retrouvailles describes the happy feeling you get when reuniting with someone you love after a long time.

I felt *retrouvailles* when I reunited with

LOST IN TRANSLATION

***Pena ajena*, Spanish**

Pena ajena is the embarrassment you feel due to someone else's behavior or actions.

I experienced *pena ajena* when

***Ya'aburnee*, Arabic**

Ya'aburnee translates literally to "you bury me." It's the hope you have that you'll die before someone you love because life on earth would feel unbearable without them.

I feel *ya'aburnee* about this person/these people

LOST IN TRANSLATION

***Farginen*, Yiddish**

Farginen is a word that means to wholeheartedly delight in someone else's success or delight. It's the opposite of envy.

I had a sense of *farginen* for

This person is someone I know who consistently exhibits *farginen*

This was a time in my life when I wish I had exhibited *farginen* but didn't

LOST IN TRANSLATION

***Razbliuto*, Russian**

Razbliuto is that sentimental feeling you get toward someone you once loved but no longer do.

I feel a sense of *razbliuto* every time I think of this person

***Iktsuarpok*, Inuit**

Iktsuarpok is the feeling you get when you're so eager for someone to arrive, you keep looking outside (or going outside) to see if they've made it yet.

I had major *iktsuarpok* going on when I was waiting for

and this is why