



the
chase

TRUSTING GOD *with* YOUR
happily ever after

KYLE *and* KELSEY
KUPECKY



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Grand Rapids, Michigan

Kyle and Kelsey Kupecky, *The Chase*
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To our precious child on the way . . .
You caught us by surprise, but we can't wait to hold you in
our arms and love you forever. Our prayer is that you will
chase after God all the days of your life. We can't wait to
meet you! We love you with our whole hearts.



Contents

Foreword by Karen Kingsbury	11
Prologue: Once Upon a Time	15
1. God First	21
2. Quiet the Noise	39
3. The List	59
4. Call Me Maybe	75
5. R-E-S-P-E-C-T	93
6. What a Girl Wants	109
7. Worth the Wait	127
8. The Climb	147
9. Just Haven't Met You Yet	161
Epilogue: Today Was a Fairy Tale	177
Acknowledgments	185

Foreword

by Karen Kingsbury

You picked up *The Chase* to learn a little about chasing God, about being in His will and finding your “happily ever after”—the one He has for your life. This book will speak straight to your heart. I believe that.

But when I see *The Chase* on the store shelves, it will always take me back.

Back to a sun-drenched Mexican beach, August 1, 1988.

It was the last day of our honeymoon, and my husband took my hand and smiled. “I have an idea,” he said. He led me to the water, as close as we could get to the shore’s edge. The blue sky stretched overhead, and we sat on the sand, side by side.

Donald turned to me, his eyes full of new love. “Let’s pray for the family we might have. The kids God might give us,

their spouses and children. Let's dedicate to the Lord all that might come after this moment."

Tears filled my eyes because I had just given my life to a man who truly chased after God and His Word and His plans not only for our lives but for the lives of our children. And so we linked hands and hearts and prayed. We asked for the Lord's blessing and direction, His wisdom and timing, His mercy and grace over our kids and their spouses and families.

However far off.

I can still feel the sun on my shoulders, still hear my husband's twentysomething voice mixing with the breeze off the ocean. The prayer is still fresh in my heart. It seemed all of heaven stood front row to the cries of our souls that day. That Mexican sand became holy ground. The thought even occurred to me, *We won't know until decades from now the power of this single prayer.*

Indeed.

Talk about chasing God.

We prayed when Kelsey was born, believing in the good plans God had for her. We prayed for her future impact on this world and for her future spouse. We prayed she would chase God the way we were still chasing Him. Kelsey's five brothers rounded out our family in the years to come, including three adopted from Haiti. We talked to God about all of our kids. Constantly. We still do.

Fast-forward to this moment.

Today, as you read *The Chase*, just know I'll be thinking about something more than that distant Mexican beach. As my daughter and son-in-love talk to you in this book about how they believe in chasing after God, I'll see myself sitting next to my husband praying in the shadow of Kelsey's crib,

and I'll see us sitting on either side of her bed listening to her pray when she was two and four and the night before her first day of kindergarten. I'll see her heading out the door to middle school, and I'll remember begging God to keep her safe and protect her heart.

Right now you're holding *The Chase*, and you'll read a book full of possibility. But for me, I'll still see the summer sun glistening off the Columbia River in the Pacific Northwest on the evening of Kelsey's thirteenth birthday—the night she promised to chase God. And I'll remember holding her in my arms while she cried when she wasn't asked to a dance.

Because she was sticking to her promise: chasing God meant everything to her.

I'll be surrounded by memories of late-night talks with Kelsey when we agreed that she should pray for her future husband. Wherever he might be.

And I will remember being asked to attend a very special concert in Portland, Oregon. I will see Kelsey running down the stairs minutes before we left for that concert, changing her mind and deciding to attend the show.

And yes, I will see Kelsey in the catering room meeting Kyle Kupecky, the opening act for the Rock and Worship Roadshow. A young man chasing God . . . the way Kelsey was. I will remember the look in Kyle's eyes as they spoke, and I will recall thinking no one had ever looked at her that way before.

Finally, today when I see *The Chase* on a bookshelf, I will see Kyle Kupecky not as he looks on stage shining for Jesus at one of his concerts. I will see him standing at the front of the church, tears in his eyes, as our precious only daughter Kelsey walked down the aisle.

the chase

Yes. Kyle Kupecky was the one we had prayed for.

We were praying for Kyle when he was a second grader singing about Jesus in choir and on the fall of his thirteenth year when he wrote a letter to his future wife. Kyle was indeed the young man we had prayed for in the days before that concert in Portland. And all the way back to that sunny honeymoon beach and a prayer we prayed for our kids and their future spouses.

August 1, 1988.

I will remember that day, because it was on that day—at that very hour—that three thousand miles away, Kyle Kupecky was born.

Incredible, right? Chase God and you never know where He will take you!

I pray reading this book will be a life-changing experience for you. This may be the beginning of your chase or an encouragement to keep running the race. Either way, today as you read *The Chase*, you'll have something else to think about.

The beautiful story behind the book.

Karen Kingsbury
#1 *New York Times* bestselling author

Prologue

ONCE UPON A TIME

Once upon a time, in a land known as the West Coast, there lived a lovely young girl and her family. On her thirteenth birthday, the girl's parents took her out to dinner and presented her with a beautiful ring and a lovely journal.

The girl and her parents talked and prayed together about her future—and they prayed for the boy who would one day become the girl's husband. They encouraged her to read her Bible and write in her journal. Write down her thoughts, her hopes and dreams, and maybe even write a letter to her future husband.

After returning home that night, the girl knew she had to do one thing: write. Write down everything that had happened that day and write what was stirring deep within her soul. As she sat by the fireplace, she began writing in her

brand-new journal. Thoughts swirled all around her. The girl wondered about her future. Dreamed about her future prince. Was he even real?

She listened to her parents' advice. The girl felt drawn to write a letter to her future husband. She had never done this before. After all, she didn't know who he was or where he was. But this night, on the pages of her new journal, she poured out her heart to him.

She told him she would be praying for him. She told him about the beautiful ring her parents had given her and the meaning behind it. She knew that life would be difficult and there would be temptations along the way; her parents warned her of that. But she told him that in God's strength she would save herself for him.

She signed it with X's and O's . . .

—XO—

Meanwhile, in a faraway land called the East Coast, a thirteen-year-old boy sat in a middle school youth group meeting where his leader proclaimed, "Somewhere out there is the girl you're going to marry. This is your chance to write to her, to let her know you're thinking of her and praying for her."

The leader passed out paper and pens to the group. When the boy received his paper, he looked out the window at the dark sky filled with bright stars. He thought about his future wife being out there somewhere—and wondered where she was and what she was doing.

The boy picked up the pen and began to write and pray for the girl who would someday become his wife. The boy longed to know this girl. When his letter was finished, the boy placed it in an envelope labeled "For My Future Wife."

And when he got home, he put the envelope in a wooden chest next to his bed for safekeeping.



As the years went by, the boy and the girl grew, each in their separate lands. They thought often about the promises they had made and the love they had prayed for.

For the girl, her thirteenth and fourteenth years were full of happy friends and bright moments. Middle school quickly passed and high school years arrived. Years that were harder. She went to a large school where the pressure to look good, wear the right clothes, and act a certain way was sometimes unbearable.

Overall the years were lonely. Super lonely.

Sure, she had fun some of the time. She dated a few boys, but she never felt like her heart was safe. The guys she dated were respectful and nice, but she knew none of them was the guy she had been praying for.

As high school passed into college, the girl would often look at the ring her parents had given her and wonder whether she would ever find her Prince Charming—the guy who would really understand how to hold not only her hand . . . but her heart.

During her junior year of college the girl gave up on trying to make things happen with guys she knew she could never marry. She told God she was done with guys and just wanted to focus on her relationship with Him.

By now the boy had also grown up and had become a musician, singing for God onstage in front of thousands of people. He loved his job as a recording artist, but he was still waiting for God to answer his prayer for that one special girl.

And so it was the boy and girl found themselves in the same place at the same time one fine evening . . .

The boy rounded a corner backstage at one of his concerts and saw the girl standing next to a female security guard. The security guard was crying. The girl couldn't see the boy, but he was able to watch her. The boy took a few steps forward as the girl stood near the woman and prayed for her. The boy remained hidden from their view.

One thought ran through his mind as he watched: *I want my wife to have a heart like that.*

The thought surprised the boy. The trait was something he wanted for his future wife, of course. But never had he been so attracted to a girl's godliness. It gripped him now. Watching the girl comfort and give hope to a stranger captivated his heart in a way nothing ever had before.

In that moment his eyes were opened. Opened to a possibility. Opened to a chance. Opened to what just might be a one-in-a-million love.



From the moment the boy and girl met later that evening, they were like lifelong friends. They made each other laugh, and they felt completely comfortable together. And of course they were also extremely attracted to each other. The details of their love story soon began to play out, constantly surprising them.

God had created them for each other—they were sure!

Before long, each was convinced that the other was the one they had been praying for all those years. Their lives of chasing God had led them to each other. The girl knew she couldn't live without the boy because he loved God and he

understood her like no one else ever had. This boy filled her days with constant adventure.

And the boy knew this was the girl he wanted to marry. He could envision their wedding day. Their honeymoon. Kids playing in the front yard. A thousand beautiful seasons. Gray hair and wrinkled hands joined together.

Together, they knew this was a love God had been leading them to their whole lives.



What happened from there? We'll share the details of our story with you later. We promise! But first we want you to know how very excited we are about *The Chase*. This book is about chasing after God in all aspects of life.

Sometimes it can be hard, and sometimes we get mixed up and chase after the wrong things. Our hope and prayer is that this book will encourage you to pursue God with all your heart.

We have one question for you: *Who are you chasing?*

Growing up, our parents and mentors used the Bible to guide us along a narrow path pointing us toward a future planned for us by God. That path shaped who we are today. And we hope this book—along with the Bible—will help guide you in that same way.

No, you aren't going to be perfect. None of us are. And you'll probably make some wrong steps along the way. But at the end of the day, always ask yourself, *Who or what am I chasing?*

Is it God?

If His name isn't your first answer, then you aren't headed in the right direction—His direction. God's been chasing

after you since the day you were born. Are you chasing after Him? Is He your number one?

In the chapters ahead, you'll hear stories and advice from each of us individually as well as some things we'll share together as a couple. That way you can hear both a girl's and a guy's perspective on all of the topics we're about to cover.

*Who are you
chasing?*

Think of this book as a night spent hanging out with your best girlfriend talking about life and love and relationships, when suddenly there's a knock at the door and a guy walks in. In the chapters to come, he'll join in the conversation to give you the inside scoop on what a guy really thinks about love and relationships.

Ultimately, we want this book to inspire you to chase after the one person who really matters: Jesus Christ. He knows everything about you, and He loves you more than you know. He has the most amazing plans for you and desires a close personal relationship with you. God's dreams for you are out of this world. Keep chasing after Him, and you'll see.

Trust GOD from the bottom of your heart;
don't try to figure out everything on your own.
Listen for GOD's voice in everything you do,
everywhere you go;
he's the one who will keep you on track.

Proverbs 3:5–6 Message

1

God First



From Kelsey

When I was growing up, my parents always encouraged me to put God first in my life. They taught me to start the day with prayer and modeled what it looks like to set aside time for personal moments with God. They emphasized the importance of making my relationship with God the number one relationship in my life.

So why is it so hard to do that? I think it's because we have so many other things pulling at us and grabbing our attention. We are easily distracted, and being distracted prevents us from being productive. When we are distracted it's easier to keep our eyes focused on ourselves rather than on God.

If we really want to put God first in our lives, we must be willing to move some things around. If we find that

our boyfriend is holding the number one spot in our lives rather than God . . . then it's time to do some shifting and rearranging.



Putting God first before any dating relationship can be extremely difficult. My heart was made to love. I feel like God designed me that way. Of course I always want God to be first, but the problem is sometimes my dating relationships would get in the way of that.

Let me give you an example . . .

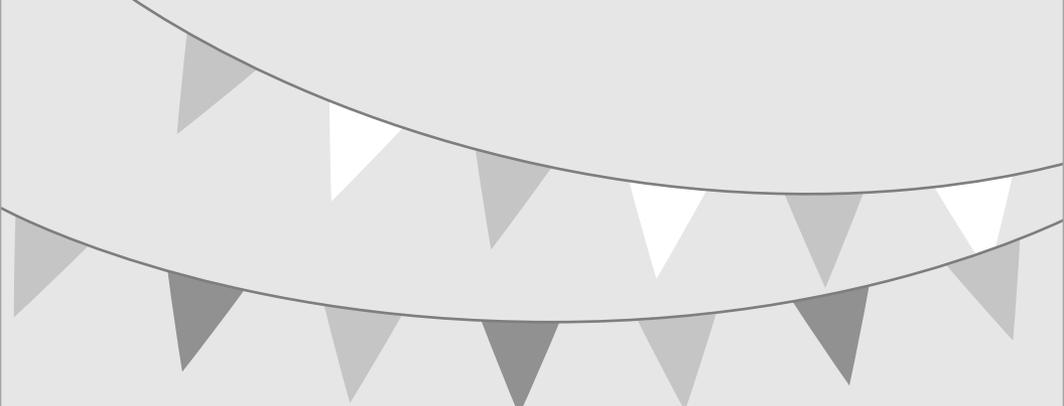
At the end of my sophomore year in college, I had a boyfriend I'd been dating for a little over a year. I really enjoyed his company (as did my family), and I definitely loved having a boyfriend. But I can't honestly say that I was in love with him. I mean, he was a nice guy and he loved the Lord, but there weren't complete sparks between the two of us.

Our relationship was safe, but it wasn't what I dreamed of.

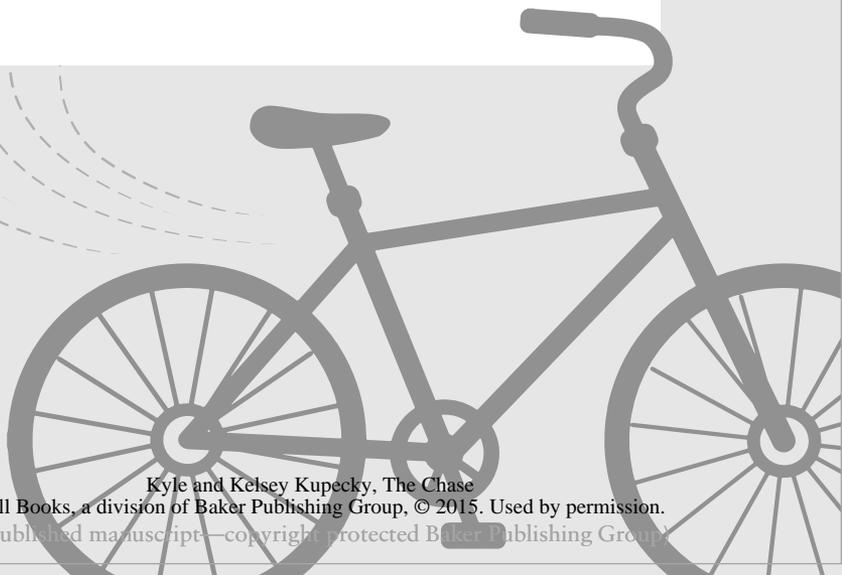
The thing is, even though I knew he wasn't my Prince Charming, I still allowed our relationship to consume my brain and heart. Days were spent focused on him and our relationship, and basically he became my number one, which can happen so easily when you are in any kind of a dating relationship.

God would quite often take second place to my boyfriend.

Even though I knew my boyfriend wasn't really the right guy for me, I was way too stubborn to admit it out loud. When my mom would sweetly ask, "Kels, how are things with you guys?" I would typically smile and say, "They're great! He's so wonderful."



If we really want to
put God first in our
lives, we must be willing
to *move some*
things around.



My mom and I have always been extremely close, so she knew that wasn't entirely true, especially since I would choose to hang out with my brothers or friends over my boyfriend when given the option. But she didn't press the issue.

Throughout the second semester of that sophomore year, I had felt my boyfriend starting to pull away. Part of me didn't really blame him. We had first dated in high school, and it was fun having someone to go to dances with at the time. But now we were both in college and the next step wouldn't be going to the prom, it would most likely be marriage. Still, we continued to date each other.

On a Monday at the end of the school year, I was stressing out big-time about our upcoming biology final. My brain wasn't really best friends with biology. I was getting a C in the class, but I knew this final was going to be brutal and I couldn't afford to get a bad grade on it. My boyfriend was in the same class as me, so naturally we were studying all the time together for the final, which was approaching in two short days.

So while I was beyond stressed about the final, at least I knew I would have the support and help of my boyfriend. We studied long and hard that week, but the day before our exam something happened that rocked my world. (Sounds dramatic, right? Let me assure you, it was!)

My boyfriend broke up with me.

I was sitting in the library waiting for him to come study, when I looked down at my phone and saw his text pop up on my screen: "Kels, we need to talk. Please meet me outside on our bench."

My heart completely stopped. My boyfriend had just texted me those famous last words, "We need to talk." And

he wanted me to meet him at *our* bench. The bench where we would take our coffee between classes and laugh and talk. I know I told you this guy wasn't my Prince Charming, but he was still my boyfriend of a very long time and I cared about him.

With a feeling of dread, I took a deep breath, gathered up my things, and headed outside. I could see him sitting at our bench about a hundred yards away. His shoulders were slumped and his head was bent as he stared at the ground.

Is this actually happening? was all I could think as I walked toward him.

Over the course of the next hour, my soon-to-be-ex-boyfriend explained how he could tell that I didn't really love him and that he knew I wasn't as into the relationship as he was. I started to cry because everything he was saying was true.

I had lost myself in just wanting to have and keep a boyfriend. I had let our relationship become number one in my life over God.

We had a long hug goodbye, and before he turned away he said, "I'll always be here for you, Kels. Oh, and good luck tomorrow on our final."

The next morning I woke up, went to look in the mirror, and could barely see my eyes. They were swollen shut because the night before I had cried my heart out.

Heartbreak is horrible. Breaking up is the worst.

Even when you know deep down that it probably is the right thing, it doesn't change the fact that your heart is shattered. Oh, and to top it all off, I had to go see my now ex-boyfriend and take my biology final.

This was *not* my best day.

My ex-boyfriend and I didn't see much of each other at all after that. It was too hard. Later that summer, I was sitting outside by myself just thinking. I knew I had let my boyfriend replace God as being first in my life. I had stopped chasing what mattered most. It was so clear to me once I was out of the relationship.

Now, it's not necessarily bad to date. It's not necessarily bad to have a boyfriend whom you love with all of your heart. But we always need to ask ourselves, What are we chasing? Who are we chasing? We need to always keep God first in our hearts and in our lives. When we let boys and dating become our number one priority, we wind up feeling confused and empty.

Dating or having a serious relationship is wonderful if you are with the right kind of godly person. God never says dating is bad. But when that person becomes more important than God . . . that's when you should rethink the relationship. That's when you need to refocus and make God the number one priority in your life again.

When I met Kyle, I could tell he was different from any other guy I had met before. The way he treated others and his humble spirit spoke volumes about his character. Kyle is not perfect (although he is pretty close, if you ask me). I'm not perfect. But I can tell you that when we met each other, we were both putting God first in our lives.

I'm not saying we had all the answers, because we most certainly did not. But we had each made a strong and bold decision to follow after Jesus and to put God first. Also, I have to tell you that both of us were completely happy and content with being single at the time. I was in a place where I was done with dating, and Kyle was in that place too.

We wanted God to be first in our lives. We still want that.



When my parents encouraged me to chase after God first in my life, they weren't demanding I be perfect. God knows everything about us. He knows we aren't going to be perfect. And guess what? He loves us just the same!

But my parents did offer me and my brothers beautiful advice when they encouraged us to put God first. God's plans are better than our own. His ways are beyond our comprehension. Even when we can't understand something that we are going through or a situation a friend is in . . . God does.

He knows best.

God doesn't want to be number one in your life because He is a selfish God. Definitely not. Rather, He wants to be number one in your life because He loves you that much. He sent His Son, Jesus, down to earth to die on a cross for all of your sins and for all of mine.

God loves us so much that when we mess up, He is right there with an ocean of grace, waiting for us to return to Him. When we put God first in our lives, we end up worrying less and we have an internal peace that we can't really explain.

I'm not suggesting that when you repent of your sins and follow God your life will be perfect.

That's not the case. But God's

plans are always far better than our own. We all have plans and dreams for our lives, but trust me, God's plans will end up being the *best* plans and dreams possible.

*God's plans are
always far better
than our own.*

Putting God first is not always easy, and it's true that we can all get highly distracted with work, friendships, and dating relationships. But through it all, keep putting God first.



Do you put God first in your life? How often do you read your Bible? When was the last time you read it—not so that you could check it off your Christian to-do list, but because you actually wanted to dive into God's Word?

I can get super busy, and sometimes a week (or even more) goes by, and I haven't stopped all of the craziness around me and picked up my Bible. God is there waiting for you and me to run to Him. Reading the Bible regularly is a great way to put God first.

Another fun way to put God first is to journal your prayers and thoughts. If you are like me, you probably have a million questions, emotions, and thoughts running through your brain. Try writing down some of those thoughts and prayers. I find that when I'm reading my Bible and also journaling my prayer requests, I feel closer to God.



From Kyle

I failed miserably at chasing God while I dated my first girlfriend. I was right out of high school and eager to have a girlfriend. There were no Christian prospects at my high school, so college was an amazing opportunity for love.

I started dating the first girl I met. I didn't care who the girl was, I just really wanted a girlfriend. What a jerk move. I wish I could go back in time and punch the old me in the

face, then tell the girl to run for the hills and stay away from that guy because he's only going to break your heart.

As this girl and I started dating, I could tell early on that I wasn't as into her as she was into me. But I kept the relationship going because it was nice to have someone, even if I knew there was no real future with her. I pushed aside any feelings of guilt for leading her on.

I was too wrapped up in having a girlfriend. I wasn't protecting her heart. I was protecting my relationship status.

I was spending lots of time with friends and with my girlfriend but not tons of time with God. I had barely even prayed about this relationship. I was not putting God first in my life, and it really showed.

There was another girl on campus who I started developing feelings for, but I knew I couldn't pursue her while I still had a girlfriend. So I dumped my first girlfriend via text message. Not at dinner, not even over the phone, but by *text message*.

Again, a complete jerk move.

I so wish I could go back and end that relationship differently. I would apologize for being so selfish. I wasn't putting her first and I wasn't putting God first. I was putting Kyle first.

The secret to being ready for a relationship is keeping your heart connected to God.

None of us are ready for a romantic relationship until we chase God first. Until we pursue Him with our whole heart. That way, you'll be defined by

*None of us
are ready for
a romantic
relationship
until we chase
God first.*

God's love. Not by a guy. Your beauty and self-worth will be wrapped up in God, bringing you peace and confidence.

If you keep your heart connected to God, you'll certainly be ready for whatever or whoever comes your way.



A high school friend of mine chased after God in a way I'll never forget.

Brody was the star of the football team. He was only a sophomore, but his talent on the field rivaled that of any senior. He was a team player, a great leader, and also a Christian. Colleges had begun to take notice of him, and so had some of the senior cheerleaders.

It was known around campus that Brody was a Christian. But what really had people talking was the fact that he was a self-professed virgin. Brody had told a friend that he was going to wait for sex until he was married. That news spread around the school like wildfire. And some of the cheerleaders wanted to see just how far Brody *would* go.

After practice one day, Brody pushed open the locker room door to leave and nearly crashed into Shelby, the captain of the cheer squad.

"Oh, sorry!" Brody said, grabbing Shelby's arm so she wouldn't fall.

"Why, thank you!" Shelby gasped as she rested her hand on Brody's bicep. "You're Brody," she whispered with a smile, "aren't you?"

Brody had lowered his hand to his side, but Shelby kept her hand firmly on his bicep.

"Yeah, that's me," Brody replied.

Shelby lowered her eyes and looked slowly back up at Brody.

“Good,” she said through a slight smile. “I wanted to meet you. Bump into me anytime.”

She squeezed his bicep, slowly let her hand roll down his arm, and then turned and walked away. Brody was left breathless. Shelby had left quite the impression.

When Brody arrived at school the next day, something had changed. Immediately, some of the guys from his team ran down the hall to greet him.

“Dude, Shelby? No way!” one guy yelled.

“Bro, she wants you,” another said, punching Brody’s side.

“What?” Brody asked, dumbfounded. “What are you guys talking about?”

Derek, Brody’s co-captain on the team, stepped forward from the crowd of guys circling Brody. “Look at this, bro.”

Derek held up his phone to Brody’s face. Brody read the Twitter post on the top of the screen. It was from Shelby’s account. The post read, “I think it’s time that football player scores some points off the field . . . He’s HOT.”

Derek laughed. “Dude, that’s you!”

Brody was shocked. The blood drained from his face in less than a second.

“You’re gonna get some!” Derek pushed one of Brody’s shoulders.

“Guys, I’m not about that,” Brody shot back. “You know me,” he said loud enough for the whole group to hear. “You know what I believe. This doesn’t change that.”

“You’ve *got* to be kidding me!” Derek almost screamed. “The hottest girl at our school wants to hook up with you . . . and you’re gonna say *no*?”

“Yeah,” Brody spoke confidently. “I’m gonna say no.”

The group began to laugh, some almost falling over in disbelief. Brody stood his ground, trying not to let the laughter of his so-called friends get to him. After a painful ten seconds, the laughter died down and Derek turned to walk away. The group followed his lead.

As he slid away, Derek yelled out one more comment: “Whatever, Brody . . . I guess you’re gayer than I thought.”

The group howled in laughter as they made their way down the hall. Brody was angry. He stood in the hallway fighting back tears. It was the worst day of his high school career.

That night Brody went to his church’s high school youth group. He was emotionally exhausted, and it was obvious to some of his close friends that something was up. These youth group friends were very different from Brody’s friends at school.

His school friends played sports and were fun to hang out with, but they didn’t have the same beliefs he did. Brody would go to school, study hard, play sports, and have a good time with his school friends, but the guys who really understood him were these guys in youth group who huddled up around him now.

“Brody, what’s up, man?” one of the guys asked.

“I feel like I’m falling and failing.” The words just fell out of his mouth. Quickly he explained the entire story to the guys around him. Bumping into Shelby. The tweet she posted. The encounter with Derek and the rest of the football team that day.

“I’m trying to do the right thing here,” Brody wrestled out. “I truly want to please God. Obviously, I know having sex with Shelby would not please Him. But now everyone at

my school thinks I'm a joke." Brody sighed. "They'll never respect me again."

"Wow," said Thomas, Brody's closest friend at youth group. "That's some insane pressure." He leaned closer and said, "But you stood up to it. You didn't let it break you. You didn't cave."

"Thanks, man," Brody said with a hint of a smile.

"No, seriously!" Thomas proclaimed. "You were true to what you believe with *all* those guys right in your face. That right there is legit. God is going to bless you for that." Thomas stood up and motioned for the other guys to stand. "Let's all pray for Brody right now. That whatever he faces tomorrow, God will give him the strength to endure and be strong."

He looked right at Brody and said, "You can do this. People respect courage. People respect someone standing firm on what they believe. The football guys will come around eventually. Be strong, bro."

The guys came around Brody and began to pray for him. Brody could feel his spirit encouraged. It was like life and strength were being poured back into him. He was ready for tomorrow.

Tomorrow came and it wasn't any easier.

Brody walked down the hall and could hear the guys on the team laughing at him. But Brody didn't let it hurt him deeply like he had the day before. God was taking the hits for him. That's what he envisioned in his mind every time someone made fun of him.

He saw Shelby in the hall, but when he passed her he would just ignore her obvious advances. If anything, her desperate attitude was unattractive to Brody. He felt sorry for her.

By lunchtime, it seemed as if the jokes from the guys had toned down a bit. They had tried to get to him, but Brody wouldn't allow them to get under his skin. Maybe his cool and collected attitude had diminished their aggression. Or so he thought.

At lunchtime, Derek made his way over to Brody's table and sat directly across from him. If anyone truly had hurt Brody, it was Derek. And by the look on Derek's face as he sat down, it was clear that lunch was about to turn ugly.

"So, you're not gonna do it?" Derek shot at Brody.

"Dude, what is your problem?" Brody asked.

"Oh, I don't have a problem," Derek replied with surprise. "But I think *you* do. I don't get you, man."

"Well, I'm sorry you don't 'get' me," Brody replied.

"Just do it, dude," Derek said sternly. "Everyone thinks you're a joke. I'm trying to look out for you."

By now the entire lunch table had quieted and everyone's attention had turned to Brody and Derek.

"You're right," Brody said. Derek's eyebrows shot up. "I could hook up with her." He waited a beat and added, "I could be just like you."

A tension filled the air between Brody and Derek. All eyes and ears were glued on what Brody would say next.

"But you could never be just like me."

I was one of the guys in Brody's youth group, and his story has always stayed with me. His determination to put God first in his life has been a huge example to me. Brody's high school experience didn't magically get easier or better because he did the right thing. But in time, the guys eventually backed off him. And his firm stance gained back the respect of many. Brody was a born leader on and off the field. But

more importantly, he let God lead his life. He put God first even when it cost him.



When I was younger, people would tell me, “Oh, just wait. Right now work on waiting.” To me, waiting sounds very passive. Like I’m sitting on a couch with my hands tied. There’s no action to it.

That kind of advice is only half of the solution. Better advice is to wait *and* chase God. While you’re waiting for the love of your life, pursue God.

In my sophomore year of college I did just that. I was studying music at a Christian school, Liberty University, when an opportunity hit me in the face. A Christian pop group was forming, and they wanted me to be a part of it.

Music and singing had always been my passion, and this opportunity would allow me to use the gifts God had given me to make an impact in the world for Him. I knew with everything inside me that this group was what I was supposed to do. I signed on and things quickly took off.

I found myself living in Nashville and recording an album, all the while being single. It was a year and a half of adventure, new beginnings, and lots and lots of prayer. We landed our first stadium tour, and I couldn’t believe it!

The tour was crazy. Five different cities in one week. Sleeping on a bus. Living out of a suitcase. Always on the go.

But on March 8, time froze.

Everything stood still when I was introduced to a girl backstage. Her name was Kelsey.

Never in my wildest dreams did I think I was going to meet my future wife that night. I was halfway across the country

from home in a state I had never visited before. At the same time, it completely makes sense that I met Kelsey then.

I was letting God lead my heart. I had been single for a while. It was the perfect moment to meet Kelsey, and it happened while I was chasing after God.

In Matthew 22:37 Jesus says, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.” We are called to love God with *everything* and to put Him first above *anything* else.

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Before I met Kelsey, I had been single for a year and a half. No flings, no almost relationships . . . *single*. In that time I was focused on where God was leading me. It was clear that this was a time for me to be single and pursue God with everything I had.

It was a growing time.

A time for me to transition from a passionate boy to a godly man.

There is absolutely no way I would have been ready to lead Kelsey if I had not had that year and a half of alone time. I had to get to the place where God was enough for me. Where I didn't need to have a romantic relationship in my life.

Think of being single as a time when God is preparing you for your future. Every minute, every hour, every month, every year of singleness is a crucial part of your preparation and journey to meet your potential future love.

I longed for Kelsey while I was single.

Of course, at the time I didn't know my future wife would be Kelsey, but I longed for that best friend and true love. I went to God with my longing. I talked to Him about her. I prayed for her—that God would keep her safe, that God would bless her dreams, that God would protect her family, and that I would be the man she needed me to be when I finally met her.

She was constantly on my mind, and it was beautiful. It wasn't a constant thought of "I need to find my wife!" It was more an attitude of "I can't wait to be with her . . . God, I trust You to work out the when and where."

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else . . . and he will give you everything you need. (Matt. 6:33 NLT)



From Us Both

How about you? What is the one thing or person that is taking the place of God in your life? Who are you chasing after? Maybe it's time to rearrange, refocus, and start putting God first again.

God is right there waiting for you. Let the chase begin!