

Robin Jones Gunn
and Tricia Goyer

Praying
for Your
Future Husband

Preparing Your Heart for His



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MULTNOMAH
BOOKS



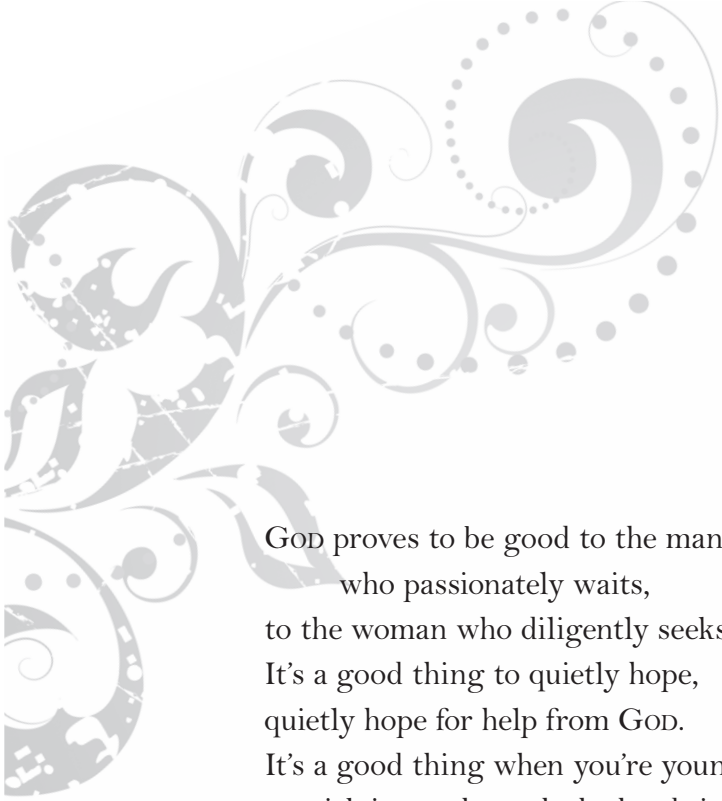
From Robin:

*To my daughter, Rachel.
You prayed, you waited, you trusted, and God answered.
Oh how He answered!
Let the happily-forever-after begin!*

From Tricia:

*To my daughter Leslie.
Like stars in the night sky, there are millions of guys to wish on.
Praying with you to find the one who will make
your dreams come true.
And may you draw closer to the Eternal One as you seek him.*





GOD proves to be good to the man
who passionately waits,
to the woman who diligently seeks.
It's a good thing to quietly hope,
quietly hope for help from GOD.
It's a good thing when you're young
to stick it out through the hard times.
When life is heavy and hard to take,
go off by yourself. Enter the silence.
Bow in prayer. Don't ask questions:
Wait for hope to appear.


—LAMENTATIONS 3:25–29 (MSG)





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An *Extraordinary* Mystery

Robin:

Sometimes, when an idea just won't go away, you need to pay attention to how God is nudging you. That's what happened with this book.

Tricia and I have been friends for almost two decades, and both of us are writers. But our life stories as well as our love stories are radically different. Beyond writing, we do have one interesting commonality: both of us prayed for our future husbands when we were teens. But how did that add up to our writing a book together? Three incidents convinced us we should...

The first moment of inspiration fell on me with a weighty sense of urgency one bright November afternoon. I was in Brazil, standing in front of three hundred teen girls in a school cafeteria. My Christy Miller and Sierra Jensen novels for teens

have been translated into Portuguese, and the teachers at this school use the books as part of their curriculum. That meant all the girls had read the books. When my husband and I entered the cafeteria, the girls greeted us with a wave of screams as if we were the real Christy and Todd all grown up and visiting them in Brazil.

To quiet down the screaming girls, I asked the translator to invite them to ask questions. One of the girls raised her hand and popped up from her seat. In Portuguese she asked me what she and her friends should do since the boys in Brazil weren't reading my books.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

She spoke passionately as the translator beside me explained. "She says that, after reading your books, she and her friends are making good decisions. They've given their lives to Christ and now want to stay pure and save themselves for their future husbands. But, you see, the boys of Brazil are not reading these books. They are not making these same decisions. She wants to know what can be done about that."

My heart pounded. Every face in that cafeteria was fixed on me, waiting for an answer. The young woman had just identified a global problem for our present generation of Christian women. I had heard this frustration voiced many times in letters and e-mails I had received from readers over the years. But no one had ever asked me what could be done to change this dilemma of an unbalanced ratio between God-honoring young women and their male contemporaries who were slow to seek God. What could I tell her?

The words that came out of my heart were, “You can start praying for your future husband now.”

The translator gave her my answer, and a reverent hush fell over the room. Before me was a troop of willing but untrained young women ready to enter the warzone to fight for the young men. But how?

I wished then that I had something more to offer those girls. It’s one thing to tell them to pray and another thing to come alongside and show them what that looks like. If only, I thought, a book existed. I wished one of my nonfiction writer friends would hurry up and write it. None of them seemed to have a passion for such a book.

The second defining moment came two years later. Tricia and I were at a writers’ retreat in California. During the afternoon break, we headed out to the pool. I settled in a lounge chair and wrote notes in my journal for a novel I was working on. Tricia succumbed to the luxurious autumn sunshine and floated off into a deep sleep.

Suddenly she woke up, turned to me, and said, “What?” as if I’d been talking to her while she slept.

I looked at her and spoke an unpremeditated thought. “Tricia, we need to write a book together.”

“Okay.” She didn’t even blink before sinking back into her afternoon lull. A moment later her head rose again. “What are we supposed to write about?”

“I have no idea.”

The gentle notion flitted past me as softly as it had fallen on Tricia. We caught the little inspiration the way an artist would

reach for a floating feather or a child would bend to pick up a pale blue pebble and tuck it in a pocket.

Over the next year or so we periodically pulled the small inspiration out of our pockets and talked about what we should write. We had lots of ideas, as all creative people do. But the affirmation and direction wasn't there. So we waited, and we prayed...

The third moment of inspiration came with such defining clarity we knew what the book was to be about.

Tricia and I were in Montana, preparing to speak at a women's retreat. The night before the retreat we sneaked off to a lodge for some last-minute planning. I entered the lodge first while Tricia parked the car in the snow. A darling little strawberry-blond toddler trotted over to me, put up his arms, and allowed me to scoop him up. His surprised young mom told me his name was Toby, he was eighteen months old, and he was usually not that friendly with strangers. Toby patted my face.

Tricia entered, and Toby's mother froze. She stared at Tricia and in a shaking voice said, "It's you! You're the one who spoke at the luncheon two years ago."

Tricia spoke often at events for teenage girls and women in Montana, so I doubted she would remember this particular young woman from a luncheon two years ago. The mom said, "Do you remember that you talked about being a teen mom and that you prayed God would send you a Christian husband?"

Tricia nodded.

"I did the same thing. I prayed and..." She leaned in closer.

"I don't know if you remember my telling you this after the luncheon, but I had just found out I was pregnant."

"I remember," Tricia said.

"I was scheduled for an abortion just a few days later." The young woman gazed at Toby cuddled up in my arms. "But after I heard your story and what you said about how God answered your prayers, I cancelled the appointment for the abortion, and I prayed for a husband, just like you did."

Her smile widened, and tears formed in her eyes as she told Tricia, "I always wanted to see you again so I could tell you that God answered my prayers. He brought an amazing Christian guy into my life. He loves me, and he loves my son. We've been married for almost a year. When I think about what my life would be like right now if I hadn't heard your story and did what you said..."

By then we were all hugging and crying and hugging some more. Toby climbed into Tricia's arms and received her cuddles and kisses. We couldn't stop crying. It was such a beautiful moment. The room seemed full of light and hope.

After Toby and his mama went their way, Tricia and I sat together in stunned silence. We both knew this was it—this was the theme of the book we needed to write together: praying for your future husband. We also knew we were the two unlikely novelists being invited to pour our hearts into this project. And so we did.

As we wrote, what tumbled from our hearts surprised us. We didn't compose a handbook on techniques or formula for effective prayer. Through the ages many wonderful such books

have been written. Instead, what we saw forming, as we met together to pray and write, was a book anchored with true stories about what happens when women pray for their future husbands and the ways God answers those prayers.

Both of us agreed to tell our own stories on these pages. This took some courage. Dozens of other women gave us permission to tell portions of their stories as well—how they prayed, how God chose to answer, and how their lives changed in the process. This took courage for them as well. We pulled from our Bibles and journals favorite scriptures and excerpts. These quotes worked perfectly to lace the chapters together.

As the book took shape, we discovered that prayer is an extraordinary mystery.

This sacred privilege of communicating with our Heavenly Father is more than a cozy, open invitation to come to Him anytime, anywhere. Even though His ears are open to the cries of His children 24/7, prayer is more than that. Prayer is also an act of obedience. We are exhorted to pray for others and to pray without ceasing.

Neither Tricia nor I pretend to have prayer all figured out. What we do know is that God hears. He sees. He knows us. He cares more than we can ever comprehend. And most important of all, God answers prayer.

Perhaps you've noticed that oftentimes the way God answers prayers isn't what we expect. We look back years later and see that what God did was oh so much better than what we first envisioned when we sent our heartfelt requests heavenward. He

created us, and He desires the best for us. God always gives His best to those who leave the outcomes with Him.

Another, even more amazing mystery is that when we pray for someone else, we change. All of us were made both to give love and to receive love. When your heart connects through prayer to the One who is the source of true love, you'll find that praying for your future husband will wondrously result in your heart being changed. And when your heart is changed, your life is transformed.

What sort of changes will God bring about in the life of your future husband as a result of your praying for him now? We don't know.

As you pray for him, what sort of changes will God initiate in your heart? We don't know that either.

But we do know there's only one way to find out...





Pray for His Heart

My heart has heard you say,

“Come and talk with me.”

And my heart responds,

“LORD, I am coming.”

—PSALM 27:8 (NLT)

Robin:

Here's a little secret about true love: it begins in the heart.

“Yes, yes, we all know that,” you say. Ever since you received your first red, heart-shaped Valentine, you've associated the heart as the place where love appears, sets up camp, and lights a warming fire. The heart is where lasting relationships begin and are kept aflame.

Anyone who has suffered from a broken heart knows that the heart is also the vulnerable place where relationships can be

snuffed out. The smoke and scent of smoldering ashes can cloud your spirit and blur your vision for a long time.

I've always thought of the heart as being like a garden. Whatever is planted there will eventually grow if it is nurtured. The fruit of that garden will be evidenced in a person's words and actions. Just as God placed the first man and woman in a garden and met with them there in the cool of the evening, God still comes walking in the garden of our hearts and calls out to us, as He did to Adam and Eve, asking, "Where are you?"

How do we respond to that call? Adam and Eve were honest after they realized they had disobeyed God, and they responded with, "We were afraid, and so we hid."

The place to start praying for your future husband is in the garden of his heart. What do you want to be growing there when you meet him? Is he hiding from God now? How about you? Have you come out of hiding?

I came out of hiding when I was thirteen years old. I was at summer camp, and the speaker said something that really got to me. "God doesn't have any grandchildren," he said. "Just because your parents are Christians, doesn't make you a Christian."

I had been going to church my whole life, and I assumed I was a Christian by association or membership or something my parents had done. The speaker invited us to stay in the chapel after the evening meeting if we wanted to talk with the counselors about how we could have a relationship with Christ.

My objective all week had, in fact, been to start a new rela-

tionship. But the relationship I wanted was with Bill Vanderland. I wanted him to become my boyfriend. Starting a forever relationship with the Lord hadn't appeared anywhere on my wish list when I arrived at Taquitz Pines with my girlfriends from church.

One of my friends, Candi, got a boy interested in her the very first night at the campfire. By Wednesday she and Dale were holding hands under the picnic table at craft time. On Thursday night they kissed behind the chapel. By Friday afternoon Dale asked Candi to be his girlfriend, and all the rest of us girls in cabin four were in awe. How did she do that? We wished we could be just like Candi. Every one of us longed to be desired and sought after. We wanted to be loved.

As far as Bill becoming my boyfriend that week, well, that just wasn't happening. I did manage to catch his attention before camp ended, though. At dinner on Friday night, I sat at the table behind his and stared at the back of his head through the entire meal. Inwardly I whispered, *Come on. Turn around. Look at me. Notice me. Talk to me.*

The moment of opportunity came. One of my cabin mates said something silly, and I burst out laughing extra loud. I mean, really-extra-about-to-snort-and-wheeze loud.

It worked! Bill turned around. He looked at me! And that was it. The beginning and end of my camp romance.

Or was it?

While Candi and Dale sneaked off behind the Ping-Pong room after the meeting on Friday night, I stayed to talk to my

counselor. She told me that God had been pursuing me since the day I was born and that He longed to have a restored relationship with me, with all of us.

I knew how it felt to want to have a relationship with Bill and end up being ignored. I wondered if that's how God felt about me. I knew that I hid from Him whenever I did something wrong. Just like Adam and Eve, I tried to cover up and not be found out.

"That's why we need Jesus," my counselor explained. "His death and resurrection made a way for us to enter into a forever relationship with our Heavenly Father."

I'm sure I had heard a lot of the things she was saying during my years of going to church, but that night it all made sense. The invitation to enter into an open relationship with God was extended to me at the heart level, and I believed.

While Candi and Dale were exchanging kisses and promises behind the ping-pong room, I bowed my head beside my camp counselor and opened the gate to the garden of my heart. I invited Jesus to come in and to clean things up, to plant new thoughts, hopes, and dreams in the freshly overturned soil.

The life-altering prayer I whispered that night went something like this: *Lord, please forgive me for everything I've done that has made You sad. I surrender my life to You. Please come into my heart. I want to live the life You dreamed up when You created me. Amen.*

That night a deep longing inside of me was filled. Not with a camp boyfriend but with the presence of the One who promised never to leave me or abandon me.

On the bus ride home from camp, I sat behind Candi and Dale. I watched them cuddle up and wished I were going home with a boyfriend too. I thought about what I had prayed the night before. Did I really mean it when I said I wanted to live the life God had planned for me? What if His plan meant I wouldn't have a boyfriend anytime soon? Or worse, what if God didn't intend for me to marry?

Suddenly the idea of surrendering my life to God's will seemed quite dangerous.

And to be honest, trusting God, surrendering my life to Him, and being in a forever relationship with Jesus has indeed been dangerous. He is in control. Not me. Crazy things have happened over the years. But living each day with Christ has also been breathtaking and beautiful and way, way beyond my wildest hopes. I know now that I wouldn't want to live any other life than the one God dreamed up when He created me.

During my early high school years, when I started to think about the kind of guy I might marry someday, I knew he had to be a Christian too. To be in a life-partner relationship with someone who didn't follow Christ would feel as if we were unequally yoked, as the apostle Paul wrote about in 2 Corinthians 6:14. I wanted my husband to have the same close connection with God because I knew that would make us even closer as a couple.

I often prayed, *God, if You have a guy for me to marry someday, then I pray that he will become a Christian if he isn't one already.*

What I didn't realize was that praying for my future husband to have a heart-to-heart relationship with God was only the beginning. God had more expansive plans for my prayers, plans that would prepare *my* heart as I prayed for *his*.

Tricia's early teen years were different from mine, but as you'll see before this book ends, God had His hand on her life all the way through, just as He has His hand on your life and your future husband's life. He has amazing plans for each of us.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.”

—Jeremiah 29:11–12 (NIV)



Tricia:

I started to dream about my future husband earlier than Robin did. My dreaming began when I was ten years old. I knew I wanted to be married and live in a little house with six children, two dogs, and one cat. I never knew my biological dad growing up. My mom and stepdad had separated more than once, and things weren't looking good. I was determined to marry the right man and to stay in love with him the rest of my life.

When I met Steven, I was only thirteen, but I was certain he was The One.

A week later Steven's sister, Tracey, invited me over to their house. Tracey and I took our sodas on the back porch and watched Steven shoot arrows at targets he had set up in the backyard.

"Do you want to try?" Steven asked.

The bow was heavier than I thought. I picked up an arrow and positioned it.

I tried to pull back on the bowstring, but it wouldn't budge.

"Here, let me help you with that." Steven stood behind me and wrapped his arms around mine. I could feel his chest on my back. His breath was warm on my cheek. His left hand covered mine as I gripped the bow. Two fingers of his right hand wrapped around the strings right above mine, and he helped to pull it back.

"On the count of three, release," he whispered. "One, two, three."

The arrow released from the bow and sailed through the air. It hit in the second ring of the target.

"Good hit!" Tracey called out.

We practiced a few more shots, and then Tracey was called inside to set the table for dinner.

"Come on." Steven set the bow on a bale of hay. "I want to talk to you about something."

I followed him to the enclosed back porch. As I leaned against the wall, his eyes were on me. I felt hot all over, and my knees trembled. I hoped they would hold me up, especially when Steven stepped closer. I wasn't sure they would.

“My sister says you like me.”

“She said that?”

He laughed. “Do you?”

I shrugged, hoping not to look too desperate. “Yeah.”

“Good.” He approached, placing his hand on the wall behind my shoulder. “Because I like you too.”

This moment felt like everything I’d waited for. For as long as I could remember, I had wondered if, like Cinderella, I would someday have my own Prince Charming. As I gazed into Steven’s beautiful blue eyes, I could imagine us being together forever, dating through high school, getting married right after college.

He smiled and leaned closer. His fingertips brushed my cheeks. Steven’s eyes were on mine, and his lips were only inches away.

I held my breath and accepted my first kiss. My first prayer for my future husband came quickly after that. *Please, God, make Steven always love me as much as I love him.*

I was certain what I prayed was the right sort of thing to ask God—to request that He make everything work out the way I wanted it to. But there was a problem: I wasn’t a Christian, and I didn’t understand how prayer worked. I didn’t yet understand about the heart connection that needed to be in place between God and me and between God and my future husband.

Here’s what I now know about what prayer is and what it isn’t.

What Prayer Is	What Prayer Isn't
Entering into a conversation with God	Viewing God as a grantor of our wishes
Seeking God's direction with choices	Asking God for a stamp of approval on decisions
Humbling ourselves before Almighty God	Demanding our rights



The whole meaning of prayer is that
we may know God.

—OSWALD CHAMBERS

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

How close is your relationship with God?

Our Heavenly Father is holy and perfect. We are frail and flawed. God's Word has made it clear that the only way for us to experience a heart-to-heart relationship with God is through His Son, Jesus.

The amazing good news in all this is that Jesus wants a relationship with us more than we can imagine. The perfect time to open the gate to the garden of your heart is today. Now. This very moment. The exact words you pray don't matter as much as the attitude of your heart. You are speaking with Almighty God, the Creator of the universe. He made you. He knows you.

Since the day you were born, He has desired that you would come out of hiding.

Call to me, and I will answer you. I will tell you great and mysterious things that you do not know.

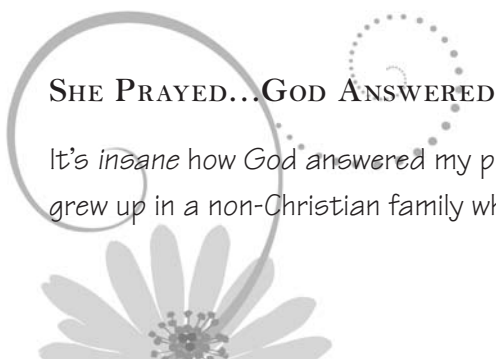
—Jeremiah 33:3 (God's Word)

HOW DO I BEGIN TO PRAY FOR MY FUTURE HUSBAND'S HEART?

- You begin by entering into a heart-to-heart relationship with God yourself.
- Pray that your future husband will become a Christian.
- Pray that he will read God's Word and that it will transform his heart.
- Pray that the Lord will clear any of the obstacles in the path that are keeping him from coming to Christ.
- Pray that God will send someone to tell him the good news of salvation.
- Pray that God will prepare his heart to hear and respond to God's call.

SHE PRAYED...GOD ANSWERED

It's *insane* how God answered my prayers. My husband grew up in a non-Christian family while I grew up in a



Christian family and started to write letters to my future husband as a teen. I put dates on all my letters. After we met and he told me his story, I went back and checked my letters. The first day I started to pray for my future husband, the day I wrote my first letter to him, is the day he became a Christian! —Jessica

Dear Robin, for many years I've wanted to tell you what happened since the days when you were my Sunday school teacher. When I met my husband, he wasn't a believer. After we had been together a couple of years, he asked me to marry him. At that moment I had to grow up. You see, I made a promise to God and to you, my seventh-grade Sunday school teacher, that I wouldn't get married "unequally yoked." You had us make a list of "Boyfriend/Husband Character Prerequisites," and on the top of that list was that our mate was to be a believer and follower of Jesus.

I told Olivier I couldn't marry him. He was a Frenchman from a secular Jewish family that had survived the Holocaust. I was a California girl who grew up in a Christian family and at a church where the Bible was the final authority in all of life.

I prayed all the time for Olivier. I continually encouraged him to read the Bible and study the Messianic prophecies, which he did for a short while, to no avail. Eventually I gave him a copy of *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey. It was through God's Word, found

in that book, that Olivier came to the realization that he needed Yeshua in his life. Soon after that, I had the privilege of leading Olivier to his Messiah, Yeshua. He asked me again to marry him, and this time I said yes.

We've been married for twenty-seven years and have experienced God's extreme blessings as we have spent our lives "equally yoked," taking the message of the Messiah to the Jewish people. —Ellen



You will seek me and find me when
you seek me with all your heart.

—JEREMIAH 29:13 (NIV)

BEFORE YOU BEGIN PRAYING FOR YOUR FUTURE HUSBAND, CONSIDER THIS

In John 15, Jesus explained to His disciples how this asking and receiving from our Heavenly Father worked. As a matter of fact, the example He gave is in garden terms. Jesus said, "I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener" (verse 1, NLT). He then told us where we fit into this picture: "I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing" (verse 5, NLT).

Praying isn't an exercise in whimsically sending off a wish into the clouds. Nor is it an audience with the king during

which we stand as beggars with a list of pleas. When we enter into a forever relationship with Christ, God adopts us into His family. We are His children. You become a daughter of the King of this universe. Just as Jesus described, you are a branch, connected to the vine. His Spirit flows through you.

Now consider this. In verses 7–8 Jesus said, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples” (NKJV).

TRUE LOVE BEGINS IN THE HEART

The best place for you to begin praying for your future husband is in the garden of your heart. Become God’s daughter and see yourself as a branch connected to Jesus, who is the true vine. Abide in Him. Read your Bible so that His words of truth will abide in you. Then, as a trusting daughter, tell your Heavenly Father what you desire.

Delight yourself in the Lord;

And He will give you the desires of your heart.

—Psalm 37:4 (NASB)



A PRAYER FOR MY FUTURE HUSBAND

Father God, I pray that if my future husband doesn't already know You, You will bring him into Your forever kingdom. I pray

that my future husband will seek You and find You. I pray that he will seek You with all his heart. I pray that Your Holy Spirit will draw him to You and that his heart will be softened and ready to surrender to You.

So many things in this world draw us away from You. I pray that my future husband will not be distracted from the truth. May he discover that You are the Lover of his soul and that his most important relationship is the one he has with You. I pray that no matter what his friends are doing, he will turn to You and that You will be the most important person in his life.

I ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

A PRAYER FOR ME

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for hearing my prayer. Thank You for forgiving me of my sins and for loving me more than I can ever imagine. I know that You have loved me with an everlasting love since before the foundation of this world. I believe that You have good plans for me and good hopes for my future.

Show me all the places in the garden of my heart where my thoughts, attitudes, and actions need to be changed. Most of all, Lord, I desire that You will bring me into a deeper relationship with You. I pray that my time thinking about my future husband, my future wedding, and my future marriage will pale in comparison to preparing my heart and deepening my relationship with You—a relationship that will last for eternity.

I pray this in Your precious name, amen.



My Thoughts ON MY FUTURE HUSBAND
AND ME HAVING HEARTS FOR GOD



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

While we wrote these questions with the intention of having a group gathered to talk about them, you can use the questions to talk over issues with your best friend, or with someone you've wanted to get to know better, or even just with God.

1. Describe the day your relationship with Jesus started.
What did you think when you gave your sinful life to Him and accepted eternal life in return?
2. If you haven't started a personal relationship with Jesus, what's holding you back? What questions do you have that others in this group could help you

with? (Or that a youth pastor at church might answer?)

3. Many times, even though we love God, we find ourselves hiding from Him. Why do you hide? What does your hiding tell you that you need to change?
4. When did you first “feel” the truth that love begins in your heart? Was it when you received a valentine from a cute boy in the third grade? Was it three years ago when someone you liked sat in front of you in history class? How has your idea of what love is changed?
5. Like Robin, do you ever see others with boyfriends and wish that was you? What helps during those times?
6. Tricia shared about her first boyfriend and first kiss. Many of us want the same thing—to feel as if we’re Cinderella and the boy who likes us will be the one we’ll be with forever. Do you think that’s realistic? Why or why not?

7. Read Jeremiah 29:11–12. What stands out to you most about this scripture?
8. What's the difference between praying for God's plans to be done in your life and asking God to give you the desires of your heart?
9. How does it make you feel to know that, if you have joined into an eternal relationship with God, He sees you as His daughter? In what ways do you think God is the perfect Father? How does seeing God as your loving Father give you more boldness as you pray?
10. What is the first thing you plan to pray for your future husband's heart?
11. When we pray for others, often we are changed. Why do you think this happens?

