

1 get Lost:

HOW DID WE GET IN THIS MESS?

The world is...a kind of spiritual kindergarten where millions of bewildered infants are trying to spell "God" with the wrong blocks.

Edwin Arlington Robinson

I can't help but think that my story has been repeated over and over in different times and cultural settings throughout history. Times change, but women and our problems in the search for love do not. Women are, by nature, before being hardened by the world's ills, willing and desirous to help others—to give and receive love. In every woman lies a deep yearning to be understood, to be loved, to be told how important she is, and touched in her heart and body. Yet throughout history, we have a track record of falling into traps, abusive relationships, and following men—and women—who have promised us love, answers, success, and whatever else we've sought after, with bad results. It's not always men who mess up women's lives! Many a woman has destroyed a man's life as well. It's a crazy cycle of "I'll get you before you get me" that no one ultimately wins.

Losing Our Way

Somehow, somehow, both men and women have lost their way. I don't think there has ever been a time in history when

she gets It! • 25

my search for “IT”: How Did We Get in This Mess?

more people have lost their way. We have more information and more promises of every possible cure for what ails us in countless books, blogs, magazines, TV programs, pills, and “you name it,” and yet we seem to still be lost.

My husband teases that his GPS’s name is Drenda. I am his constant companion and the hope that he won’t end up lost somewhere. Even so, we’ve made an occasional wrong turn and gotten lost for a while. But I’m not talking about having a destination and making a simple wrong turn. I’m talking about the kind of lost where we don’t even know “where” the destination is, much less know how to get there. We humans have lost our way and have no idea where to find it.

Like the time my mother and I were returning to Georgia from a funeral in Alabama. We started in the right direction, but in the midst of conversation, we somehow got on the expressway headed west. *Hours* went by. To our shock, we crossed the Mississippi state line before we realized we had headed in the totally wrong direction. Exhausted and tired, we stopped at a Cracker Barrel, had dinner, then got back on the expressway and headed east. It was late, and we were extremely tired. How much time had we

**Thus does the world forget
You, its Creator, and falls in
love with what You created
instead of with You.**

AUGUSTINE

wasted going in a direction that took us farther and farther from our destination? We had missed our purpose.

Our travel fiasco mirrors so many people’s lives. Looking for happiness and love, many of us pursued it in the wrong direction, which we didn’t know was the wrong way until we ended in a place that was nothing like the destination we sought to achieve. Realizing we were lost, we looked for answers from female icons of our day, but all we received was

my search for “IT”: How Did We Get in This Mess?

a lot of superfluous talk, more about feeding our needs through a stopover on the road than heading in the right direction to begin with and truly enjoying the rewards of the journey.

We’re lost all right, but we don’t know it oftentimes until it’s almost too late and we’re too tired to fix it. Then someone comes up with a new stopover, such as “If you’re not enjoying love and sex at home, an extramarital affair will surely fix it.” “You deserve to be loved.” “Have it your way.” “Use him before he uses you.” “Twelve new sexy makeup techniques.” “Leave your man for a female partner.” A lot of talk; most of which is bad advice, and it’s certainly not the destination. We are still lost.

Is there a way home?

Understand Your Purpose

To know my destination in life, I first need to understand my purpose. If I want to fix something that is broken, I have to go back to the original design to discover how it was intended to function. Whether you believe there is a Designer or not, it’s hard to deny the intricate, amazing details of our bodies, the earth, the animals, vegetation, weather patterns, galaxies, and the unique imprint of every human being—not to mention the different complementary design of men and women. *There is a Designer of our lives and world, so there is a plan and purpose and function for our lives.*

As I’ve read and studied Genesis 3, I’ve come to understand the “earth curse” that came upon all of creation at The Fall of man and woman in the Garden of Eden and the staggering impact of that curse. I think most of the answers to life’s questions lie in the dawn of creation. That curse affects every area of our lives,

she gets It! • 27

my search for “IT”: How Did We Get in This Mess?

from our outlook on life to our finances to our relationships. The curse reads, “Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you” (Genesis 3:17–18). This was spoken to Adam because of his act of disobedience against God. God said, “Because of you” these things happened.

It was never God’s intention for us to live in a world filled with so much pain and suffering. Everything He made was good, and the earth was given to man and to woman as a great gift to enjoy. Some people argue about why a loving God would let them make the decision to obey or disobey His rule, but the fact is that without choices, love is not love. God did not force the objects of His love—the man and woman—to follow Him or serve His plan for their lives. Love isn’t love if you have to force someone to give it to you or coerce them to share their life with you. Even if you buy it with favors, money, or anything else, it’s bribery, not true love.

As a result of The Fall, Adam had a strong diversion from not only his love for God that day, but also from the incredible woman who had been given to him as an amazing gift to love and cherish. Before his treasonous act, he was able to focus on loving his wife and sharing with her in the pleasures of the Garden and its beauty. Now he had to focus on trying to fight against thorns and thistles and the earth curse to make it through just another day. *Survival became his way of life, and loving Eve fell by the wayside.* A man’s strong sex drive and need to have a physical release would drive him back to his wife at times, but his focus became how to scratch out a living, how to survive. Pressure and pain replaced the provision that God originally gave him in the Garden of abundant delight.

Sharing in the Earth Curse

In the biblical account of The Fall, I want to focus on what happened to not only Eve, but to every daughter of Eve who would draw a breath after her. Besides sharing in the earth curse that would require her and her husband to look for provision and fight to eek out a living, another curse came upon her and all womankind. She was instructed that because she was deceived and misused her influence on her husband, she would have *pain in childbirth, a longing desire for her husband and his attention (which would go unfulfilled), and her husband would rule over her* (see Gen. 3:16).

Instead of Adam loving her the way he was originally intended, his focus would be consumed by conquering contenders, and that would keep him occupied and busy, too busy for his wife. She would spend her time trying to get his love and attention, and it would fall continually short of her desire. Not to mention, he would often see her as a contender as well. She would make demands on him for love and become critical when he wasn't “there” for her. Emotional outbursts and disrespectful words would replace her love and respect for him. The man and woman would be caught in a tug of war to get what they “needed” instead of lovingly providing for each other's needs. He would resort to harsh rule over her instead of treating her as the companion and friend who was taken from his side and created to be a helper and lover in his life.

**The mass of men
[and women] live lives
of quiet desperation.**

HENRY THOREAU

What a mess everything became. From this point forward, turmoil entered all relationships, especially between men and women. When Adam and Eve messed up things in the Garden,

my search for “IT”: How Did We Get in This Mess?

they hid from God in fear (see Gen. 3:8). Insecurity and guilt ruled their lives, and *every person born into the earth-cursed system has experienced the same loss of completeness*. God called out to them in their hiding, and they responded that they were hiding because they were “naked and ashamed.” Before this, the Book of Genesis records that when God made them, “they were naked and not ashamed.” They had no secrets, no fears, and no abusive attitudes toward each other. They had real love and real companionship, where they were happily working together and sharing a deep love.

Yet when God finds them, Adam says, “The woman *you* put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it” (see Gen. 3:12, emphasis mine). Not only did he blame his wife, Adam blamed God as well! After his accusation of the woman, God turned to her and asked her what she had done. I think He asked her in a tender way. She explained that her actions were due to the serpent’s lying deception, which had come through the promise of being made wise like God if she would eat the fruit. God was not in any way caught off guard by her misunderstanding and emotionally based bad decision. Satan, the enemy of God who had been rejected for high treason and rebellion (see Isa. 14:12–15), had instructed Adam and Eve how to follow the same path. *The curse they received was brought on by their own actions; it was not God’s desire or decision to curse them*. He had given them a choice to love Him, and they had decided to go their own way. The Scripture reads, “*Cursed is the ground because of you*”—pain in life had come.

The insecurity they both felt alienated them in their relationship as well. Fears of how to navigate through life, and the pain of being separated from the love they had known, surely left

my search for “IT”: How Did We Get in This Mess?

them blaming each other. Adam blamed Eve for the calamity and went so far as to try to shift the blame to God. There must have been a tremendous amount of brokenness in their home, because their children, Cain and Abel, the very first children on earth, got into strife and Cain murdered Abel (see Gen. 4:8). Children learn from their parents, and the idea to abuse or even murder another human being must have been modeled in the displays of anger they witnessed in their parents’ lives.

As It Was in the Beginning

Women and men today suffer the same deceptions, misunderstandings, and out-of-whack priorities originating from this earth-cursed system. When you understand the effects of The Fall of humankind, you can see and begin to understand the vain endeavor of both men and women to regain their identity in the wrong ways. It is not surprising that men often seek to get their sole identity from their careers and successes, trying to conquer the earth curse through hard work and long hours, neglecting their spouses and children. Their wives complain of their lack of involvement in the family, and strife results as the two of them fight each other trying to get their needs met in the relationship. Children often become the bargaining chip and the real losers of the game.

Many men have resorted to simply pursuing their careers and having sex on the side, without a commitment to marriage. In their “success and money pursuit,” they work and pursue sex wherever they see opportunities and have no time or interest to invest in long-term relationships. They have plenty of discretionary income to spend on themselves, vacations, the gym, and golf, because they have no children to support and no wives to take a cut.

my search for “IT”: How Did We Get in This Mess?

And we did—or should I say, the women’s movement,—did this to ourselves. Women have confided in me that they are now supporting their deadbeat husband because he never worked, and now that they are divorced she has to pay him alimony! She pursued a career to take care of her family, and now he gets a large part of it. Is this the equality we thought would free us from the

There is a God-shaped vacuum in every heart.

BLAISE PASCAL

pains of the earth-cursed system? The deliverance has taken on many names, but *none have delivered women the true equality or love we have sought.*

I can’t tell you how many women I’ve talked to who are trying to pressure their “boyfriend” to make a decision to “get married” as they continue to live with him and give him the sexual benefits of a marriage commitment without any commitment. I always ask the women, “What reason does he have to make a commitment if everything he’s looking for is given to him without one?” When these men finally concede to the pressure to prove their love through a wedding and do get married, these relationships seldom last a year. Then they are both on the prowl again, looking for another fix for his sexual needs and new reassurances in her quest for love. Their insecurities only increase through the brokenness of the relationship, and the reaffirmation that men and women can’t get along with each other is heightened.

How many billions of dollars do women spend annually trying to figure out how to get men’s love and devotion? Fads, makeup, fashion, and diet pills are all a part of the chase. Check the headlines in the tabloids at the grocery checkout counter: “How to Get Your Man to Notice You” and “Sex Secrets That Will Keep Him Coming Back.” All of these vain promises have turned any hope of lasting and meaningful relationships into mere hype.

32 • she gets It!

my search for “IT”: How Did We Get in This Mess?

One of the frightening outcomes of a self-focused pursuit to get love is the tragic headline of a mother who allows her own child to be abused in order to “keep” a man. I can think of no greater fall of humankind than the protective and nurturing desire of a mother perverted against her own daughter for personal gain. Then there is also the message of abortion, the same brand of destroying a child in order to pursue “self.” The insecurity of The Fall is just reenacted over and over in her life as her choices mimic those of her ancestors, and her choices produce the same death and destruction that Adam and Eve witnessed in their lives and in their children.

A woman who discovers “IT” can never be happy destroying others to get what she wants.

Searching for a Fix

Everywhere I turn, I see the breakdown of this earth-cursed system in the lives of women, men, children, and society as a whole. We seem to run from one person’s opinion to another’s on “how to fix it.” We change our theories about life, love, happiness, and relationships, but we don’t find the answers; otherwise, the merchandising of “answers” would have halted long ago.

Untold sums of money are made selling women “the look” and telling them how to achieve it. I am not against fashion or looking wonderful, but I see so much focus on outward beauty and so many selfish attitudes that go with the pursuit of self that any external vision of beauty is lost. My mother said it best (probably on our extended road trip to Mississippi), “Pretty is as pretty does.” We don’t act so pretty because something on the inside is wrong. *It seems easier to focus on what we see in the mirror rather*

she gets It! • 33

my search for “IT”: How Did We Get in This Mess?

than on “who” we are and what makes us beautiful on the inside and the outside.

Young women are the most vulnerable. Older women are driving the car in the wrong direction, and young women are following on a quicker path of destruction. The desire to get a man to love them has translated into women hooking up, having sex on the first date, and spending untold amounts of money, time, and energy trying to compete with other women for the “man” of her dreams.

Women spend a large amount of their time in front of the mirror, trying to decide if they look beautiful, sexy, and desirable. They ask questions about their looks and seek approval for just about everything on a constant basis. Most women wake up every day looking for outside stimulus from compliments, a second look from an adoring man, or the affirmation that the mirror tells them they match the latest view of beauty as seen in the images of magazines and movies.

**A voice in the wind
I do not know;
A meaning on the face
of the high hills
Whose utterance
I cannot comprehend.
A something is
behind them:
that is God.**

GEORGE MACDONALD

The way a woman packages herself has a lot to say about her and will attract that kind of person. If she dresses sensually, more than likely she will attract a man who is interested in her for her sensuality. If a woman wants to attract a man who respects her as a woman of God, she should reflect that in the way she carries herself and dresses. The outside should reflect the inside with beauty, modesty, and sincerity.

“Your desire [longing] will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.” *It sounds like the earth curse is still working.*

my search for “IT”: How Did We Get in This Mess?

More and more women are throwing off the “man thing,” and some have resorted to female partners who really “get them.” Or they’ve resorted to self-made fantasies such as I noticed in the December 2009 *Glamour* magazine: “Nothing’s more invigorating than sex. Have sex with yourself on your lunch hour.” I can think of nothing emptier than that.

How lost have we become?

Instead of going back to the original Designer and fixing it according to His design, we say, “Why not just throw out the design and make something new, even if it still lacks? Men don’t need women, either. We can have meaningful relationships and satisfy our appetite for sex with the same sex.” Although this is not the first century in which people have drawn this conclusion, it’s never become a workable long-term solution. Very, very few of these relationships are long term or successful, and it brings with it an entire new set of social problems, from who gets the surrogate child at separation to serious emotional, spiritual, and medical repercussions. Something’s very wrong with this picture, and it completely misses the Designer’s mark. It’s a stopover but not even close to the real deal.

All in a Pursuit of Love

To keep from being lost or to help us find our way out of being lost, today’s guides are the women’s talk show hosts who try to tell us how to get to our destination—of how to get so-called love. We know love and security must be out there somewhere. We just don’t know how to find it. We cry out for someone to please tell us how to get there, but all they tell us is “what to be.” Nobody tells us “who we really are” or “what our purpose is and how to get there.”

she gets It! • 35

my search for “IT”: How Did We Get in This Mess?

I came to a point where all my media mentors, my female icons, fell one at a time from the throne of popularity in my world. Many of the women who supposedly had “IT” died of overdoses, car wrecks, or murder; or suffered from alcoholism, career declines, divorces, or rumors of their selfish outbursts. It made me rethink the answers they had offered at the pinnacle of their popularity. I began to see them as puppets who had been used to sell a product or ideology while they were in the limelight. I even empathized and pitied some of them, because as a woman I could identify with the compromises they made to get what they thought would make them happy—only to end up disillusioned and with their hopes shattered in the process.

All in a pursuit of love.

Maybe that’s why we’re lost.

Do we even know what “love” is?