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The Dating Game

A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN FOR
YOU AND THE CHURCH

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I love being a minister. Truly, I do. Yes, there are challenges and joys, pitfalls and privileges to being a pastor. But getting into the game is a trial and adventure all its own. How does a young woman gets her foot in the door without “putting her foot in it”?

Accepting God’s call to ministry can be a beautiful spiritual experience. We discern. We pray. We study. We work together, believing with all our hearts that the Holy Spirit will mystically intervene in our faithful adherence to church polity to bring about a happy and holy union between a congregation and a pastor.

But I can’t say I felt the same way during the final three months of my seminary career. I had met all the necessary requirements to seek my first call to ordained ministry. But as the interview process with various churches lagged, cloaked in mystery and confidentiality, it hit me: I was about to *graduate*, and

I needed a J-O-B. Of course, the ministry of Word and Sacrament isn't a job, it's a *calling*. But when you're facing imminent expulsion from student housing, termination from your work-study job, and the prospect of living in your parents' basement for an indeterminate amount of time, suddenly you realize that what you need is not a calling but a *job*.

Maybe you're not in this situation. I hope the ordination process has been a breeze for you, and that you've felt God leading and guiding you through each step along the path. Perhaps you know just where you'll be heading post-graduation. You can frame your degree, the movers will show up a week later, and you'll be settled in your new home and new ministry without missing a pay period. If this is you, you're in the blessed minority. Godspeed, and you may skip the rest of this chapter. If, however, you are approaching or somewhere in the midst of the tempestuous process of becoming a pastor, read on for caution, advice, and hope.

Most church processes for entering ministry are at least somewhat bureaucratic, confusing, frustrating, or downright ridiculous. If you're in the Presbyterian call process, you're in the land of endless acronyms. You must meet with CPM, complete your required units of CPE, develop your PIF, interview with PNCS, and finally get your call approved by COM. Representatives from your denomination and board of pensions may provide workshops at your seminary about the call process and terms of call. I highly recommend that you attend these workshops and get your hands on as many resources as possible as you make your way through this maze. Whatever your denomination, make sure you understand the process, locate your resources, and identify as many helpful people as possible. Particularly if the seminary you attend is not associated with your denomination, you will need to take the initiative to acquire an adequate knowledge of next steps and resources to keep you out of the dreaded parental basement. (Full disclosure: the basement isn't so bad. I lived there for six months, and

I very gratefully survived until I received my first call.) Knowledge is power, baby.

Searching for a call, especially a *first* call, is somewhat akin to attempting to get picked for a kickball team. During your final months in seminary, you stand on the sidelines, watching as your classmates are offered this or that choice position, sometimes the very positions for which you interviewed brilliantly. You begin to wonder if, in fact, you are called to ministry. You wonder why no churches seem to agree with God on this matter, and panic begins to set in.

In many of the interviews for my first call, nominating committees seemed concerned that I would view the position at their church as a “stepping stone.” Some churches attribute an associate pastor’s brief tenure to the pastor’s professional ambition. My suspicion is that many young pastors are desperate for a *job* and will therefore assume that the Holy Spirit is at work in the first church to offer them a call. After months of searching, writing cover letters, making phone calls, and interviewing, one can become quite adept at rationalizing God’s role in any call. Thus, we might be less than faithful in listening for God’s voice in the call process, jump the gun, and end up in a toxic situation (more about this topic later in the book). Within two years, the toxicity of the call has become abundantly clear to us, our congregations, and anyone with ears who dares to approach us. Our first call may not be a “stepping stone” to bigger and better things. It may be more like a pothole we fall into and have to climb out of. It’s little wonder that many pastors (male and female) find themselves wondering in their first five years of ministry if a career as a day trader isn’t what God is really calling them to.

What it takes to survive this often grueling, soul-consuming process and to remain faithful in hearing God’s call is humanity, humor, chutzpah, and a little TRUST: Talk, Rock, Understand, Study, Take. (I had to devise my own acronym. I am Presbyterian, after all.)

We're All Human, but You're a Woman

No matter how much you know, whom you know, or how smoothly your process goes, you will face frustrations along the way. And it's likely that at some point the process will frustrate you particularly because you are a woman. In all honesty, my male colleagues had plenty of troubles along the bumpy road to their first church. Statistically, however, it takes women longer to receive their first call, and they are paid less than their male counterparts in similar positions. Many of our frustrations are the same as those of any other person seeking to follow God's call to ministry in the church. Some of our challenges mimic those experienced by any young person today entering the secular workforce. Still, some aspects of being a young woman entering the ministry are unique.

Just as when you go out on a date for the first time, you might be looking for Prince Charming in your first call. Chances are, you won't find him. First, you don't really know what you're looking for. Unless you've worked in the church for years before entering ordained ministry, you don't really know what life is like under the robe until you've tried it on. Second, many of the "choice" positions will be filled by your male counterparts. While your male classmates may have their age and experience working against them as they strive for those big-steeple pulpits, you have an added strike against you: anatomy that doesn't match most churches' ideal for a shiny new pastor. One girlfriend's mentor told her that what every church is really looking for in a pastor is "Jesus with a young family." Sorry, ladies, but Jesus, though he was many things, was not a woman.

Those denominations that ordain women may require churches to interview women and minorities for any open position, but they don't require churches to change their traditional views or ideals. Those kinds of changes, unfortunately, just can't be made a requirement. As I often remind my parishioners, the church is made up of human beings. People in

the church are stunningly similar to people outside the church. We have stereotypes and fallen understandings about human relationships, and we miss God's kingdom vision. Changes in perspective are coming with time and experience, but they're not here yet. As a woman in ministry, you'll have to learn to work with the church as it is so that you can then work to make it what it ought to be.

Have a Plan Q

As I was approaching graduation, I had *the* perfect call in the bag. It was everything I thought I was called to do and be, and it was in the perfect location. I continued interviewing with other churches—just as a back-up, you know. My anxiety level, however, began to creep up when, after graduation, the call process continued to drag on, and I had not yet been extended a call to any church. I was one of two final candidates for two calls. I was feeling pretty good. Odds were, I'd have a *job* in a few weeks. I had a Plan A and a Plan B. Who could ask for more? Imagine the crushing sense of defeat and total horror when I was not offered either call. My husband had already left his job, our contract with seminary housing would end in a few weeks, and we had a five-month-old baby. We really needed to be prepared for anything on the wild and unpredictable rollercoaster that is the movement of the Spirit. We lived with my parents for six months and eventually landed where God wanted us, but that wild and terrifying ride certainly was not what I had imagined as the culmination of my seminary training.

As you creep ever nearer to becoming a basement-dweller, you will undoubtedly try your best to remain faithful to your sense of God's call on your life. But we all have to pay the bills, secure health-insurance coverage, and find a stable home. The hope I can offer you is this: even after all my trials and tribulations, I still believe the Holy Spirit is driving this crazy train—which means that you have to figure out how to pack for the

ride. For some, that might be easy. Just pack light and keep that hopeful and adventurous spirit. For Type-A personalities like me, you might need a very large suitcase. First, you will want to prepare for the worst-case scenario. Figure out how you're going to get by for at least a year without a call—how you're going to get health insurance, what you'll do for work, whose basement you'll move into (we actually had three offers). Have all that in place before you even start looking. Go into the call process with confidence that you don't have to find a *job*. But get a job, if necessary. Then find your calling. It's an enormous letdown, after three years of seminary, to go back to an ordinary job. You are all set to get out there and be "the Reverend" and change the world. However, it's a much bigger letdown to discover that your first "call" is actually just a job, because you were too poor, uninsured, and emotionally drained to start another round of interviews.

Learn How to Interview

Interviewing for a call to ministry is not the time to display how virtuously humble you are. Nor is it a time to hop in the back seat and let someone else drive. God is partnering with you in this process, and you've got to step up and do your part. Early in the interview process, I had the sense that the Holy Spirit was just going to drop the ideal ministry in my lap. All I had to do was show up for interviews on time, and God would take care of the rest. I had some very poor first interviews. Eventually, I learned that I had to be prepared to interview well, ask good questions, and take responsibility for my part in the call process.

Every church will ask what you think your strengths and weaknesses are. Just as you would in the "real" world, you highlight your strengths and explain how your weaknesses really are strengths in the end. And you say it as though you just discovered that fact in the moment, and the pastoral search committee has done a good deed in boosting your self-esteem.

Many young women (and young men) entering ministry don't have a strong human-resources background or a ton of interviewing experience under their belt. My advice to you: *get some*. There's plenty of good interviewing advice online at any job-search site if you happen to be lacking friends in the human resources department. Practice interviewing with friends. Call church members you know who have served on search committees, and ask them to try to remember the kinds of questions they asked.

Speaking of Questions . . .

In my first meeting to begin the ordination process, I was asked by a member of my church session (governing board), "So what are you going to do about having children?" I was newly married and entering seminary, and while it was certainly none of these people's business what I was going to do about having children, I didn't have the good sense to keep my personal life personal. I told the dozen or so people gathered there that I thought it was completely insane for anyone to try to have children while in seminary. My son was born three weeks before the start of my last semester. Never say never. And never answer questions that shouldn't be asked in the first place.

But the real moral of this story is that, as a woman in the church, you will almost certainly be asked questions that should never be asked. People in the church, I've found, can pose profoundly inappropriate and even illegal questions to candidates for employment and ministry.¹ While this pitfall is disappointing no matter what your age or gender, young women can expect to be asked questions that will not be asked of your male (and possibly your older female) counterparts.

While my denomination, like several others, has been ordaining women to ministry for a good half-century now, the prospect of a woman in the pulpit is still unnerving for many. Many congregations have never had a female pastor. Many

more have never had a woman as a head of staff. While it might be easy to see a male pastor as that preacher/theologian-in-residence that seminary prepares us to be, when a woman is being considered, many congregations aren't sure what they should expect.

In the numerous interviews most of us must undergo to receive a call, many will begin with the standard, agreed-upon set of questions. But watch out for follow-ups, questions that begin with, "I see here that you wrote . . .," and anything that follows the words, "Does anyone have anything else they'd like to ask?" Yes, these are standard parts of the interview, but this is the point in the interview at which inappropriate questions are most often inserted. This is when you can expect such questions as, "Will your husband attend church here?" "What is your opinion of dating church members?" "When do you expect to start having children?" "Do you think you'll get married?" "Do you have a problem with God the Father?" and statements like "If you don't bring in new members, we're sure that you can breed them in." Truth is stranger than fiction. I've had male clergy friends who were asked whether their wife would be singing in the choir and others who were told they would certainly draw younger women into the church. We'll deal more extensively in later chapters with managing your personal relationships in ministry. The point here is to be prepared for those questions that should never be asked and comments that should never be made.

You may really love a church, and you may feel called to ministry there. You may connect to the members of the search committee immediately. And then someone will ask or say something that is patently offensive or idiotic. Now you have to decide how to handle this. Do you not take the call, assuming this person is expressing the attitudes of the whole church? Do you dismiss the comment, assuming this is the viewpoint of one ignorant (or possibly just nervous) member?

While it's up to you to decide, my advice to you is this: Don't let offensive remarks go unnoticed, but don't let them cloud your judgment. Ask a follow-up question to gauge how

the other members of the committee are reacting. You'll be able to tell fairly quickly from the red faces or heavy sighs if the rest of the committee is embarrassed by the question or remark. If you're not getting a good reading, and you have to assume the question has not been asked of your male counterparts, you may need to be more direct. Ask why the information the member has asked for is important to the committee. While it would be nice to be able to tell people that the question they have asked is too personal, you are interviewing for a pastoral position in which you will be privileged to personal information about your church members. It may seem natural for them to want to have a good deal of personal information about you. Especially if the church has not previously experienced a female pastor, the inappropriate and personal questions may be expressing the parishioners' need for you to paint a picture for them of what they can expect of your ministry.

These are hard questions to address head-on, but if you don't do it now, it will smack you in the back of the head later. If the committee as a whole is embarrassed by one member's question or remark, the others likely won't come to your aid. You may or may not be offered or accept this call, but they have to keep being in Christian community, and, more important, serve on this search committee with the offensive question-asker for an indeterminate amount of time. While they may not defend you, they do want to see you handle the situation pastorally and, perhaps even more important, authoritatively. I've witnessed a number of pithy-yet-respectful comebacks to inappropriate questions asked of female pastoral candidates. But you have to have your head in the game, keep your cool, and take all the time you need to respond.

Don't Let Elephants Sit in the Room

If something feels uncomfortable, say so. To make a gross generalization, women pick up on tension or high emotion in a room much more quickly and accurately than men. Use this

sensory aptitude to your advantage, and don't let the tension be one more factor that makes an interview miserable. A simple, "It feels as though there is a lot of tension in the room. Is there something going on that you want to tell me about?" will suffice. You may find out that the head of staff is pressuring the committee to make a decision quickly. You may discover that some major upheaval is going on in the church that might influence your sense of call (in one direction or another). There might be some major disagreement within the committee about your fitness for ministry. Whatever you learn, it will be helpful information for you, and the committee will be more at ease knowing the elephant has moved on to greener jungles.

God Has a Sense of Humor— So Should You

Your ideal call may not look anything like what God has in store for you. Be open to looking outside your desired geographical area and ministry specialty. I hope you have developed your own sense of what a call to ministry is about, but part of that sense should take into account the fact that God, not you, is in control of this process. Be yourself—the wonderful woman made in God's image that you are—as you go through the call process. It is difficult to hear and discern the right call in an environment with a lot of stress and noise. In the call process, everyone is nervous, anxious, and fearful. The committees are worried about finding the *right* pastor, and you are worried about making sure you go where God sends you *and* that your bills get paid next month. There's nothing you can do about search committees. But you can keep your own sense of humor intact. Take a bit of the seriousness and anxiety out of the situation, and you'll be doing everyone a huge favor, including God.

I'm sure you know the difference between appropriate and inappropriate humor. OK—I *hope* you do. I'm giving you the

benefit of the doubt. But plenty of people don't know how to distinguish between what's funny in one situation and what's offensive in another. I had one girlfriend who found herself interviewing with a regional board of ministers for a position. Much of the meeting was spent listening to crude, demeaning, sexist jokes told by members of the all-male board. These were *pastors*, possible future colleagues! She, of course, couldn't join in the fun, and she was shocked and baffled by the situation. I hope you'll never have to experience such extreme circumstances, but be prepared to handle inappropriate humor. Don't pretend something is funny when it's not.

Be sensitive to how you are using humor as well. When interviewing for a youth pastor position, you might be tempted to throw in a "That's what *she* said" to show how well you can relate to middle-school boys. Not a good plan. Humor is great for lightening the mood, helping people feel comfortable in an anxious situation. But be sure the joke isn't made at another's expense and is not demeaning to any category of people (which pretty much rules out *all* middle-school-boy humor).

TRUST: Talk, Rock, Understand, Study, Take.

Talk to the committee, talk to references, talk to anyone who knows anything about the church. Talk to friends who are interviewing at the same churches you are to see whether they got similar impressions about the church (you don't have to ask them how they answered the interview questions or if the committee smiled at them more). Talk to friends from the area where you're interviewing. Talk to people to gather information, to discern your thoughts and feelings about the churches you're considering, and to hear God speaking to you through their voices.

Rock the interview. "Rocking" an interview means participating in faithful dialogue, not selling yourself. Be yourself. Be

the pastor God is calling you to be, even though you may have no idea yet what that will mean. You do need to be your very best self, but you don't need to be the self anyone else wants you to be.

A good interview doesn't mean that the committee loved you and wants to issue a call tomorrow. I once had a spectacular interview with a church that thought very differently from the way I do on a particular theological point. One committee member really liked me and was trying to persuade the rest of the committee that I was "the one." But it was obvious to me that the rest of the committee had been convinced by the head pastor that this one issue was the most important factor in calling a pastor to this church. I knew this going into the interview, and I had a wonderful, faith-filled discussion with the committee members. We both knew from the start that I wouldn't be called there, but I was grateful for the opportunity to articulate my position and express my hopes and blessings for their future ministry. Likewise, they were very gracious in their speaking and listening.

Understand what you and the church really want. It can be difficult to get clarity about what a church is looking for. In my denomination, churches have to fill out an information form explaining in detail who they are as a congregation and what they're looking for. But these forms can be full of coded or loaded language that you may not be able to decipher. Take whatever information you're given, and ask lots of pointed questions to gain clarity. How many hours a week will you be expected to work? How much of that time do the members want you to spend in the office? What kinds of expectations do they have about your personal life? Many churches express a desire for their pastors to have a "strong relationship with Jesus Christ" or a "visible and steadfast faith walk." How will they determine this about you? How will they judge whether your ministry is successful? Are the expectations they have of the pastor the same expectations they had for their male pastor in the 1950s

who had 2.5 children and a wife at home to keep everything spotless, bake brownies, and sing in the choir?

I had one mentor who served a church for many years as a single woman. She later married and had a child. While the church rejoiced over her marriage and embraced her child, some resented the fact that she wasn't always available since she now also had to pick her child up from preschool and attend her child's various activities (which were not extensive). The congregation had come to expect that they could have this pastor's full attention. When she became a wife and a mother, she was just as excellent a pastor. But members' perception was that she was no longer the pastor they had called. Interestingly enough, when this pastor left the congregation, the next pastor called was a single woman.

It's also important that you be clear about your expectations. One pastor I know sets a limit of working two evenings a week. I've yet to be able to set such boundaries, but if you're able to come to this kind of understanding up front, it will serve you well, especially when you have children who would like you to tuck them in at night on occasion. Make sure the church understands how you see your role in ministry. If you have no intention of riding in on a white horse and saving the congregation, make that as clear as possible. If you expect that your days off will be your days off, let the church know that up front.

You will likely still encounter surprises in your ministry, even if you set up clear expectations in the interview. My first call was supposed to be 95 percent youth ministry. The committee truly believed that was what I'd be doing, because I was replacing a non-ordained youth director. However, I knew the dynamic would be somewhat altered by the fact that the church was losing its head of staff. I couldn't have imagined at that time that three years later I would be the church's only associate pastor. I still minister with youth, but my responsibilities are very different from what was outlined in the interview. I'm loving it now, but the transition was bumpy.

Try your best to understand what you and the church really want and expect, and communicate clearly through the interviews, but be prepared to deal with surprising developments.

Study the church. Ask for information (budgets, finance reports, mission studies) from the churches you are seriously considering. Check out their websites (assuming—hoping—that they *have* websites) and read everything on them. Ask the committee about the church's history, previous pastors (particularly those in the position you are interviewing for), traditions, and prominent members. Find out how the community surrounding the church views this congregation. A question I asked at every interview is, "What is the 'word on the street' about this church?" Follow up by asking other pastors in the area or regional church leaders for their impression of the church. Does the church advertise in the local papers? What sorts of community events does the church sponsor, host, or participate in? Asking for this much information may sound invasive, I know, and the committee might take offense if you ask for it in a less-than-sensitive manner, but this is essential data for your study of a church.

Find out as much as you can about the community. You will thereby gain not only important information about where you will potentially be living, but also a clue as to how in tune the church is with the community in which it is located. Perhaps the church prides itself on its diversity. If you then discover that the community surrounding it is relatively homogeneous, you might ask what members mean when they talk about diversity. If the church claims solidarity with the poor but is located in a wealthy suburb, find out how members see themselves living out that solidarity. If you discover a thriving arts community around the church but see no sign of a flourishing arts ministry within the church, that discrepancy might raise questions for you.

Study this church and its surroundings the way you would research your finest exegetical work. Remember, this is not

just a job. It's a place where you're going to live and minister for, God willing, a significant length of time. Few pastors get to move to familiar surroundings in their first call, so do your homework on your potential new home.

Take the call (if God tells you to). OK, this one sounds a little obvious, but the call of God is not always easy to discern. It's also important to realize that you are an active participant in this process. You may be offered a call at a time when you are still interviewing with other churches. You may be fortunate enough to be offered two or more calls that you must choose from. Or you may have searched for months and finally receive an offer, but feel unsure whether you are really called to that ministry. This can be one of the most agonizing parts of the call process and requires a lot of prayer and soul-searching. This is the time to ask questions you may not have considered earlier.

- Will my gifts and skills (as I understand them) be appreciated and useful in ministry in this place?
- Where might God be calling me to grow as a pastor and person, and how might this call contribute to that growth?
- Will I be able to minister effectively here on a personal level?
- Do I feel the pull of the Holy Spirit in some meaningful way to this place?

You'll need to clear away the clutter of needing a J-O-B, wanting to live in a particular locale, envisioning yourself in a certain kind of life, and open up your imagination to let God work on giving you a vision for your future ministry.

Once you've discerned that a particular church is truly where God is calling you (and the search committee has gotten a similar divine message), you're ready to accept a call. But taking the call is not quite as simple as saying "Here am I, Lord. Send me." You now have to put on your big-girl panties and

negotiate the terms of your employment with the church, and once again, you need to do your homework. In my denomination, the salaries of all pastors are public information. Other denominations publish salary guidelines based on the size of the congregation, the pastor's role, and other factors. If such information is available to you, use it! Find out what churches of similar size in your area are paying pastors in your position with similar experience. Two years after taking my first call, I learned from a male friend of mine in a smaller church in my area that because he had checked out my salary before he negotiated his terms, he had asked for more money (and got it)! A girlfriend who served on a committee overseeing the terms negotiated by pastors in her area was shocked to discover what some people will ask for (and get). It's not just about money. Most denominations have some minimum standards, but such benefits as vacation and study leave, sabbatical, housing, office space, book allowances, travel allowances, and even maternity leave are all up for negotiation. I've heard of pastors asking for cell phones (with the calling plan paid for, of course), laptop computers, and even administrative support.

Now at this point, I hope you're saying to yourself, "But this is the church! This is not the place for self-advancement and greed!" Your indignation is duly noted. And I agree that, in some cases, your indignation is warranted. I would also caution you not to negotiate your way out of a position to which you feel deeply called. However, you also don't want to settle for less than you can live on (or live with). If the walls of the office you will be inhabiting sixty hours a week are painted puce, and that happens not to be your favorite color, it really isn't a bad idea to address this preference up front. Do it before you discover that the church refuses to repaint the office because it was just repainted to get it ready for the new pastor or because the growth chart of the former pastor's beloved child is marked on the wall in permanent ink.

Something like a laptop might seem extravagant until you discover that all the church plans to provide for you is a 1966 Olympia “DeLuxe” typewriter. Unless you were blessed with enough graduation cash to set up your own twenty-first-century office, you might want to think about helping the church make the millennial leap.

Another shocker: most churches have a small enough staff that they don’t have to comply with the federal Family Medical Leave Act. While many churches are compassionate and thrilled to have you bring a new life into their midst, many will struggle with how to work out maternity leave. Save yourself the tension and heartache: even if you have no imminent plan of childbearing, discuss maternity leave (and any other medical leave you think might be necessary for you and your family) in your original terms.

When it comes down to final decision-making, people like to say, “It’s not about the money.” Well, as I was told by one search committee, it’s always about the money. The advice I was given was to work out your personal budget (keeping in mind the cost of living in your new community²), and decide what you will need to live on—not today but in five years. Because many pastors don’t receive even cost-of-living raises, if you ask for what you can live with for five years, you can remain in your position for at least that long. After that point, you have to decide if you can ask for more (if you need it) or if it’s time to move on. The last thing you want to do is to begin your ministry broke and then get even more broke because you didn’t negotiate for what you truly needed. If the church to which you feel called is not in a financial position to offer you what you need, there are options for you and for them. For clergy, salary is subject to both income tax and Social Security and Medicare taxes, housing allowance is subject only to Social Security and Medicare taxes, and some other allowances are tax-exempt. Some money is counted when calculating pension

payments; some isn't. If you can live with a smaller cash salary (perhaps because you have a spouse with a decent job), you can make more with less by asking for more in housing and other tax-exempt allowances. And there are some things money can't buy. My church wasn't able to give me a raise for several years, but my son has been allowed to attend the church's weekday programs free of charge. Over the years, our family has enjoyed thousands of dollars of excellent child care and preschool I would have had to pay for. Creative negotiating works out for everyone.

The Higher Power.

When I was in seminary, many people asked me if I would seek a call in Michigan, because that is where my husband's family lives. I informed them that it would be a warm day in Michigan before I moved to that icy wasteland. Many people also somehow sensed that I would go into youth ministry. Funny, because I never expressed the slightest interest in it. But it seems churches that might squirm at a woman in the pulpit will sometimes consent to a woman playing guitar around a campfire. I informed those who encouraged me toward youth ministry that I don't play the guitar.

Today, of course, I am a youth pastor in Michigan. It's the only proof I have that the call process is indeed completely directed by a higher power. It hasn't always been dreamy, but it is undoubtedly where God has called me to be. So take heart and have faith, my girlfriends. God has a mate in mind for you. Just be ready to play the game.

The Girlfriend's Checklist

- No one is perfect; you probably won't find your Prince Charming on the first date.
- Have a plan Q.

- Learn to interview well.
- Don't let elephants sit in the room. If you sense there may be something the call committee is not telling you, find out what it is.
- Be prepared for inappropriate comments and humor.
- Remember to TRUST God and:
 - *Talk* to anyone who knows anything about the church.
 - *Rock* the interview.
 - *Understand* what you want and what the church wants.
 - *Study* the church.
 - *Take* the call (and negotiate well)!

