

The Story Behind '99 Things Every Guy Should Know'

There are actually three dudes behind the book 99 Things Every Guy Should Know. Jeffrey Wallace is the president and CEO of Front Line Urban Resources, Mike Hammer is a youth pastor and Matty McCage works on the youth ministry team at Group Publishing.

The following is a Q and A with the book's authors:

JG: Jeffrey, what's the story behind the book, *99 Things Every Guy Should Know*?

JW: The story behind 99 basically came from the fact that Matty, Mike and I are all fathers of boys, and we all desperately shared the desire to do whatever we could to try and make sure they did not make some of the same mistakes we made growing up. We all agreed that if there had been some type of manual or road map for young men, or resource out there, besides True Love Waits, when we were growing up, we may not have made some of the same decisions and mistakes. We also wanted to leave a legacy for our boys that they could look back on and be proud of, and at the same time, help other young men who do not have a father in their life, a positive male role model, or just simply have typical male adolescent issues and questions about the journey of life.

JG: Matty, I know you had a lot of struggles you could share about growing up. Can you share one that was cut from the book?

MM: Growing up, my dad was in the house but he wasn't totally engaged in my and my siblings' lives. My dad believed in the saying, "do as I say, not as I do." And because of that, my father never really talked to me much about what it meant to be a real man. Our sex talk consisted of him bringing a condom

and a banana in my room, putting the condom on the banana and then telling me, “don’t bring any babies in this house!”

I learned about being a man from my older brother and hanging out with my boys in the streets. And as you can imagine, that wasn’t the best example to have as a curious teenager. As a result of the way I was raised, and the lack of guidance from my father, I got into any and everything. I struggled with what it meant to be godly man, even though my mom took us to church weekly and I honestly had a desire to be spiritual. I knew there was more to life than what I saw, I just didn’t know how to obtain it.

As I got older, I struggled even more with making proper decisions when it came to my future, relationships, lust, sex and struggles with porn, finances and handling money, my education, and the type of people I should allow in my life. You name it, I struggled with it. I was totally lost and I had no one to guide me but my big brother, the homies on the block, and what Tupac, Biggie Smalls and Jay Z taught me through their music. As a teenager, I equated success with things and masculinity with the number of girls I was talking to. Basically, I had no clue! I so wish I’d had this book to give me some type of insight and perspective on the things I needed to know as a young man.

JG: What would be the best way to use the book? Just give it to the guys and be done with it, journey through it together as a small group, graduation gift?

MM: This book can be used in small groups as discussion items or trending topics, gifts for rising ninth graders and graduating seniors, or for any young man that you know does not have a consistent role model or influential male voice in their life, and they’re unsure about the answers to specific issues that they’re struggling with. They need help when it comes to their journey to becoming a healthy and productive young man.

JG: What were some other topics you were hoping to cover that didn't make the 99?

MM: Some other topics I would have loved to cover in the book are how to recover from grief and tragedy, a deeper conversation about how to bounce back from rejection, disappointments and setbacks, and how to deal with being molested, abused or abandoned. I believe a lot of these hard issues are very much a reality for a lot more young men today than we know or believe.

JG: If you could give one piece of advice to a freshman guy coming into high school this fall, what would you tell him?

MM: My middle son, Christopher, is a freshman this year in high school and if I could give other freshmen a piece of advice, I would tell them like I told my son—enjoy the journey, but take it one day at a time. Take your time and develop a rhythm that works for you. Be true to who you are and don't try to be something that you're not. The investment that you make in yourself today will dictate your journey and destiny tomorrow.

Get the book here.

Josh Griffin *has been in youth ministry for 16-plus years in one small church and one big church. He currently serves as the High School Pastor at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif. For the original article, visit .*