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The Gospel According to Justin Luke

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The party promoter and author's top 10 tips for gay 20-somethings.

November 14, 2014



If Justin Luke Zirilli—better known to New York party boys as Justin Luke—wants today's gay 20-somethings to realized one thing, it's that nothing is all that important in your 20s.

"They need to understand that your 20s are not as important as you think they are," the party promoter and author says. "They're kind of a time when you should be trying everything and messing up—as long as you're not hurting yourself or hurting someone else."

His latest self-published book, *The Gay Gospel*, is a how-to guide for doing just that: trying everything without fucking up your life. In it, he offers advice on life, love, sex, and, of course, partying. But Zirilli, whose previous works of fiction are set in New York's gay nightlife scene, didn't set out to write a self-help book. Over the past few years, he found himself doling out advice via Facebook and his own blog to the 20-somethings who frequent the parties he and his BoiParty partner Alan Picus throw each week. "It occurred to me, I am writing a self-help book," he says. "It's just appearing in different places."

The advice in *The Gay Gospel* may be aimed at a younger demographic, but as Broadway star Billy Porter, who wrote the book's afterword, points out, these tips could apply to 30-somethings and 40-somethings as well. Ahead of the book's November 18 release, Zirilli picked the top 10 most important pearls of wisdom he hopes to impart, exclusively for *Next Magazine* readers. —*John Russell*

1. You don't need a boyfriend!

This is the most important rule when it comes to gay dating. Chant it while you drive to work or your friend's house party. Remix it with a drumbeat and listen to it while you work out. You need food. You need shelter. You need oxygen. You need money. You do not need a boyfriend. A boyfriend is not going to solve your problems. When you feel like you need a boyfriend, odds are that a boyfriend is the last thing that you need. What you need is to focus on you.

2. We're all fucked up.

No one thinks they're amazing and perfect, even if they're forever posting underwear selfies on Facebook, and even if they strut down the street like they own the place. Hot guys may feel stupid. Rich guys may feel ugly. Powerful guys may feel lonely. No one gets a free pass out of this sort of occasional self-loathing.

3. Don't take sex so seriously.

Sex is a crazy thing. It's silly. It's weird. It's funny. I suggest that you embrace this reality before you rip off each other's clothing. Have fun with it. You don't need to pretend you're some porn star. Laugh, giggle, and understand that sex is a lot more awkward than any of us would ever care to admit.

4. Safe sex is not an option, it's a requirement.

There are few things I consider in black and white terms. Safe sex is one of them. Unless you want an excuse to go to your friendly neighborhood clinic, wrap it up and keep it that way.

5. Friends with benefits rarely work out.

While it may seem like a heaven-on-earth arrangement, it's usually a terrible situation for one of the guys involved. I don't care what you say about how you feel; the more time you spend sleeping with someone, the more of a connection you will forge with them. One of you will inevitably end up jealous, in love, or who knows what.

6. Make every other drink at a party a bottle of water.

A bartender once told me: "Getting drunk is a funny thing. You're basically dehydrating and poisoning yourself." Imagine every cocktail drawing water out of your body. That's water you need to put back in there. As an added bonus, hydrating may help you fight off a hangover!

7. Don't wait for what you want to come to you.

Another issue I've noticed among gay 20-somethings: no one wants to make the first move. While you and the cute guy you're eyeing are pretending you're not checking each other out, a guy with a bigger set of cojones will sweep in and nab one of you. You've lost your chance and the guy who made the move gets what he wanted. Go after what you want. Be bold. Be brave. You'll be surprised how often it will work out in your favor.

8. Go out and try to get rejected.

I believe that our fear of rejection is far worse than the actual feeling of fresh, raw rejection. The best way to get over your fear of it is a bit of exposure therapy: just keep trying to get rejected. The more it happens, the less you'll feel it. The day you no longer fear rejection will be the beginning of the rest of your gay life. Who succeeds in this world of low-self-esteem gay boys? The emboldened ones who are not afraid of rejection.

9. Put money in a savings account every week.

Saving money is boring. I'll admit that. I'd much rather go out and buy video games. But you know what? There's a nice feeling that comes with a sense of security. If I lost my job, I have enough in my savings to live income-free for a year or more.

10. Do one good thing for someone every day.

Every day I try to do one good deed. You should do the same. Doing something good for someone and seeing their happiness is an amazing reward in and of itself. Surprising a boyfriend or friend or family member with a gift, or giving that homeless person a dollar, or going out of your way to help a friend move are all good deeds as far as I'm concerned. Whether karma is a real thing or not, I live my life as though it is.

From Justin Luke Zirilli's The Gay Gospel: A Survival Guide for Gay 20Somethings in America Today, available in paperback now and on Amazon Kindle November 18. Visit justinlukenyc.com (<http://justinlukenyc.com>) for more info.

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