

Valentine's Card  
by J.E. Solinski  
First published in *Straight*  
February 12, 1995

Greg stared at the array of cards before him and felt his palms grow sweaty. What was he going to do? There had to be over two hundred cards here to choose from, and it was all important that he pick exactly the right card for Krista.

Just the thought of her made him smile. They had been going out for only a little over a month, so this was the first time he'd had to buy anything for her, and he *had* to buy *something* for her, but what a mess a guy could find himself in if he didn't pick the right card.

He picked up one from the rack and read it.

*Roses are red,  
Violets are blue.  
So what else is new?  
Happy Valentines Day.*

Pretty clever, but he didn't think Krista would think it was that great of a card. Too corny and, well, Valentine's Day was supposed to have a little more feeling in it. He tried another.

*On this Valentine's Day,  
I want to give you what I know your heart most desires.*

He opened the card and looked inside.

*A picture of me! Happy Valentine's Day!*

He grinned. It had possibilities, but seemed a bit egotistical. And they didn't know each other *that* well. She might think he was being serious. He put it back and moved down the row to the cards that looked a little more serious. He picked one up. It had two pages of gushing verse, and he felt his feet go cold and his fingers numb. Hurriedly he stuck it back. A card like that could wind up getting a guy married. No thank you.

He ran his finger around his collar and dived back in. This was murder. They should have a little manual out here for guys on how to pick the right card. If you pick one too romantic, she thinks you proposed. Pick one too casual, you've lost her to the competition. It was worse than buying roses. At least with roses you knew where you stood. White means friendship and red, love. Simple. But not cards.

"Excuse me," he apologized when he bumped into another guy searching through the racks. He looked around. There were tons of guys just like him, perusing through the cards with anguish, searching for that perfect card. He hit an entire empty shelf.

*Guess I shouldn't have waited until Valentine's Day to do this,* he chastised himself. He figured the perfect card for Krista had probably been in that now barren bank of shelves right in front of him. Now he was left with all the losers—well, he and the other fifty guys here that had waited till the last minute.

Girls have it easy, he thought. Guys don't even read the cards they buy, or if they do, they don't really take them seriously—though you'd better look like you read it and enjoyed it in front of her. But girls, man, they pour over every card, reading each verse as though it was written just for them. And then they give you those eyes that tell you you either went too far and now were in

hot water, didn't go far enough and were in hot water, or—he thought about it for a moment. Maybe you never won. Maybe there were no perfect cards. Maybe the card industry knew this and just set men up for the kill.

He rubbed his eyes and looked at his watch. He was supposed to pick Krista up in a little over two hours, and here he was still in the card shop. He closed his eyes and prayed.

*Lord, if ever I needed your help, it's now. Please help me pick out the perfect card.*

He moved along the rack and grabbed one, knowing full well this was not truly a godly approach. He looked at the front. A cute little puppy with a forlorn look. That was good. It was cute. Girls were into cute. It wasn't overly romantic. Guys don't like overly romantic. He opened it up.

*I'd be lost without you as my Valentine.*

*Happy Valentine's Day!*

OK, he thought. It was a little sentimental, but it wasn't overkill. Plus, it was short. Those long ones could get you into too much trouble.

He breathed a sigh of relief and headed for the counter, then grabbed a box of candy on the way. What the heck. He was feeling pretty good now. He paid the cashier and went whistling down the mall.

What was it about these holidays? Three hundred and sixty-two days of the year, he didn't have to worry about little problems like these, the sticky situations. But Christmas, birthdays, and Valentine's Day a guy could find himself in a tight pickle without some guidance. He should probably pay more attention to all the signals girls send during the rest of the year, listen to his mother's advice, and watch more of those informational news shows with Connie Chung or Barbara Walters that come right before such holidays.

He tilted his head in thought. It was a lot like his Christian walk now that he thought about it. He really didn't think much about God's principles for most of the year because life just kind of cruised along without any major hiccups. But when he *did* find himself in a tight spot, in unfamiliar terrain, it certainly did help to have some very clear guidelines to help him through.

He sobered. How many times had he balked at God's principles, squirmed under their seeming narrowness? How many times had he really wanted to tune out the sermon or the lesson? He was thankful now that he hadn't. It was one thing messing up a relationship with a girl you had known for month because you made a social blunder. But it was something else to jeopardize your relationship with God because of a moral one.