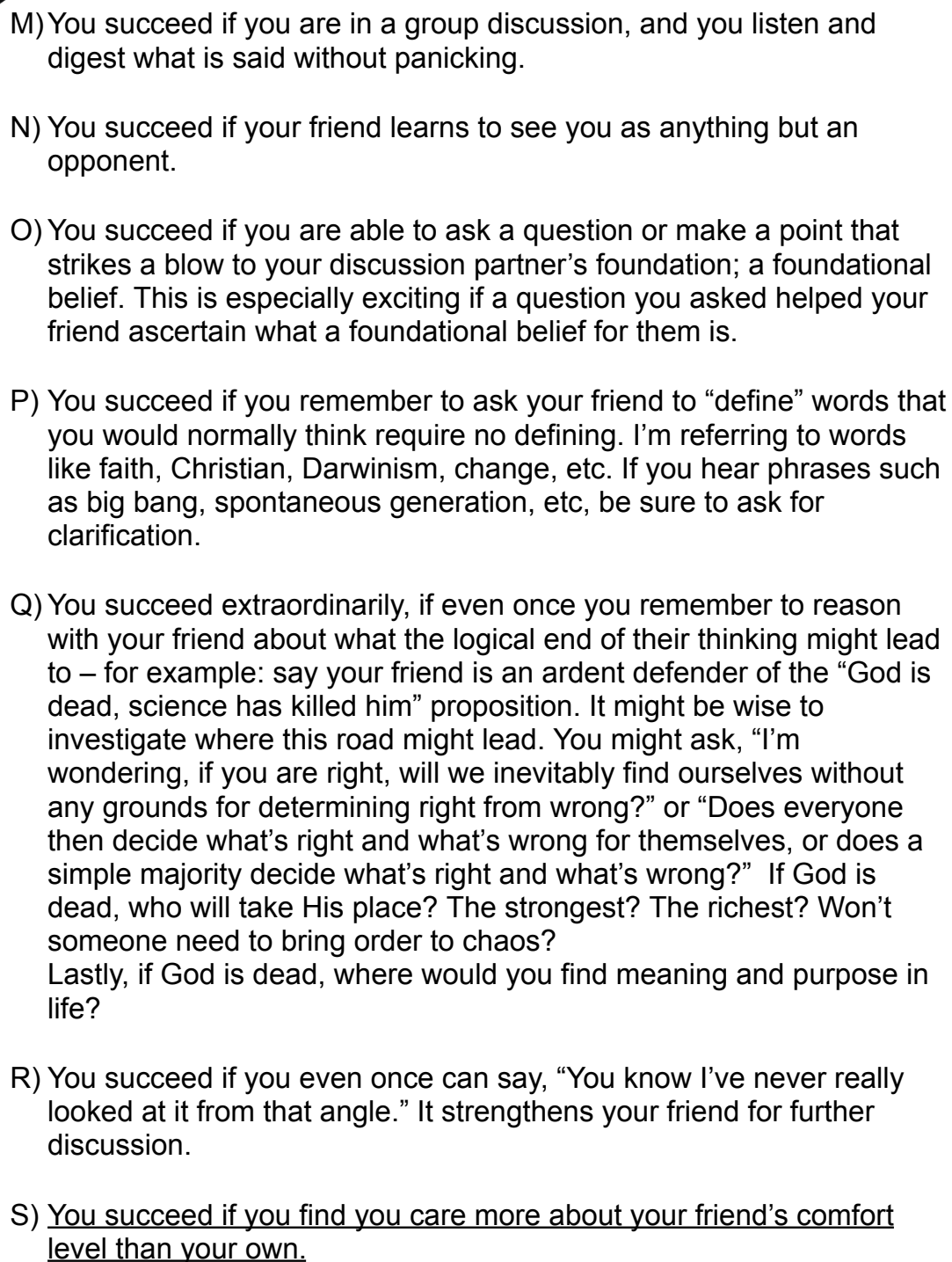
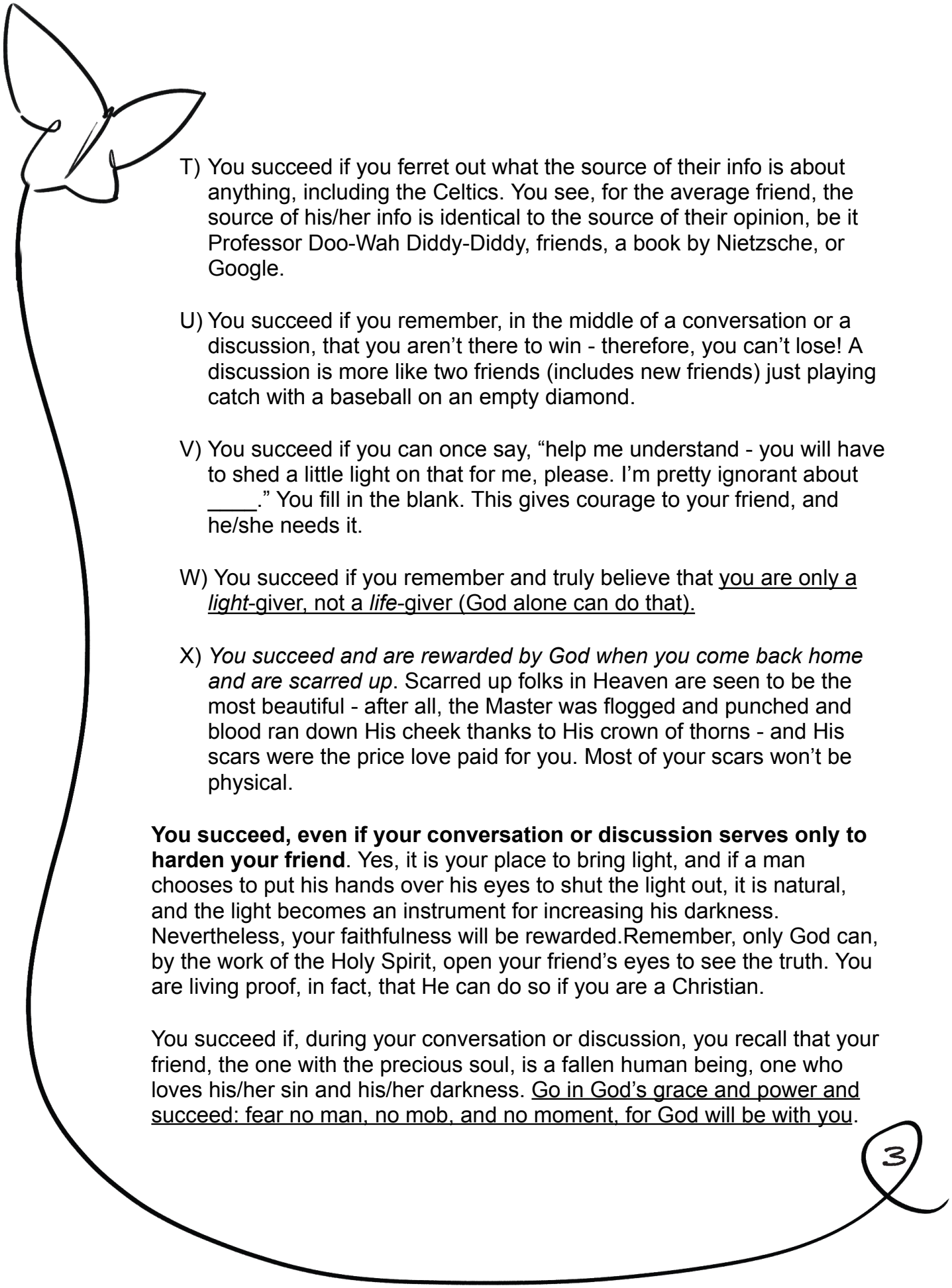




## THE ALPHABET OF SUCCESS

- A) You succeed if trust is built.
- B) You succeed if a relationship is built or strengthened.
- C) You succeed if your friend is able to articulate their misgivings, reasons for unbelief, personal grudges against religion, etc.
- D) You succeed if a single belief you have is understood by your friend.
- E) You succeed if your friend moves even an inch from his/her current position.
- F) You succeed if even one of your questions or statements is planted in the memory of your friend (think a stick in the spokes of your bicycle's front tire or perhaps, at times, a bomb that later goes off in your friend's brain).
- G) You succeed when after ending the conversation or discussion, you climb into your car and realize you didn't even once try to win – you stuck to persuasion.
- H) You succeed, if under pressure, you were listening, really listening to your friend and were not busy formulating an answer before he/she finished speaking. (This normally takes time.)
- I) You succeed, when upon review, you were authentic 60% of the time.
- J) You succeed, when upon review, you truly listened, even for scattered moments, remembering that he/she has an immortal soul and that it is at stake. Your words and your thoughtfulness truly matter.
- K) You succeed when a conversation blossoms into a discussion.
- L) You...succeed...if you don't talk over your friend.

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- M) You succeed if you are in a group discussion, and you listen and digest what is said without panicking.
- N) You succeed if your friend learns to see you as anything but an opponent.
- O) You succeed if you are able to ask a question or make a point that strikes a blow to your discussion partner's foundation; a foundational belief. This is especially exciting if a question you asked helped your friend ascertain what a foundational belief for them is.
- P) You succeed if you remember to ask your friend to "define" words that you would normally think require no defining. I'm referring to words like faith, Christian, Darwinism, change, etc. If you hear phrases such as big bang, spontaneous generation, etc, be sure to ask for clarification.
- Q) You succeed extraordinarily, if even once you remember to reason with your friend about what the logical end of their thinking might lead to – for example: say your friend is an ardent defender of the "God is dead, science has killed him" proposition. It might be wise to investigate where this road might lead. You might ask, "I'm wondering, if you are right, will we inevitably find ourselves without any grounds for determining right from wrong?" or "Does everyone then decide what's right and what's wrong for themselves, or does a simple majority decide what's right and what's wrong?" If God is dead, who will take His place? The strongest? The richest? Won't someone need to bring order to chaos? Lastly, if God is dead, where would you find meaning and purpose in life?
- R) You succeed if you even once can say, "You know I've never really looked at it from that angle." It strengthens your friend for further discussion.
- S) You succeed if you find you care more about your friend's comfort level than your own.

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- T) You succeed if you ferret out what the source of their info is about anything, including the Celtics. You see, for the average friend, the source of his/her info is identical to the source of their opinion, be it Professor Doo-Wah Diddy-Diddy, friends, a book by Nietzsche, or Google.
- U) You succeed if you remember, in the middle of a conversation or a discussion, that you aren't there to win - therefore, you can't lose! A discussion is more like two friends (includes new friends) just playing catch with a baseball on an empty diamond.
- V) You succeed if you can once say, "help me understand - you will have to shed a little light on that for me, please. I'm pretty ignorant about \_\_\_\_." You fill in the blank. This gives courage to your friend, and he/she needs it.
- W) You succeed if you remember and truly believe that you are only a light-giver, not a life-giver (God alone can do that).
- X) *You succeed and are rewarded by God when you come back home and are scarred up.* Scarred up folks in Heaven are seen to be the most beautiful - after all, the Master was flogged and punched and blood ran down His cheek thanks to His crown of thorns - and His scars were the price love paid for you. Most of your scars won't be physical.

**You succeed, even if your conversation or discussion serves only to harden your friend.** Yes, it is your place to bring light, and if a man chooses to put his hands over his eyes to shut the light out, it is natural, and the light becomes an instrument for increasing his darkness. Nevertheless, your faithfulness will be rewarded. Remember, only God can, by the work of the Holy Spirit, open your friend's eyes to see the truth. You are living proof, in fact, that He can do so if you are a Christian.

You succeed if, during your conversation or discussion, you recall that your friend, the one with the precious soul, is a fallen human being, one who loves his/her sin and his/her darkness. Go in God's grace and power and succeed: fear no man, no mob, and no moment, for God will be with you.