

PRACTICE, PRACTICE

WALKING THE TALK?

How important is practicing religion or spirituality in your life?

45 percent say very important
31 percent say somewhat important
24 percent say not important at all

45%
63%

Are you involved with a religious or spiritual organization in Colorado?

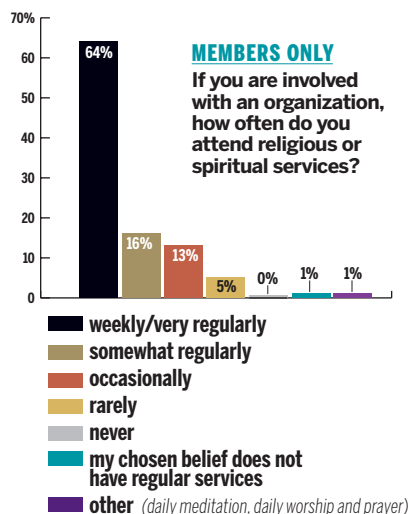
63 percent say no
37 percent say yes



BOOK CLUB

Have you read your faith's sacred texts?

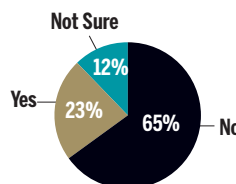
48% say "Parts" ● 34% say "Yes, all of them" ● 18% say "No"



SOCIAL ISSUES

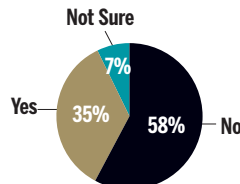
DARWIN'S THEORY

Does evolution directly conflict with your religious or spiritual beliefs?



THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE

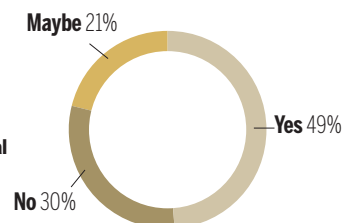
Does abortion directly conflict with your religious or spiritual beliefs?



MARRIAGE

DEARLY BELOVED

Would you (or have you) marry someone who has a different religion or spiritual philosophy?



The Vow Factor

BY THE POWER VESTED IN...OURSELVES.

AFTER MY BOYFRIEND pulled a diamond ring out of his pocket a few months ago, we gave ourselves some time before we jumped into the planning. There was the where, the when, the who, and the how—a decision-making bonanza that would consume us, in a good way, for months. We happily indulged in the frivolity of cake browsing and gown shopping...and then a friend asked if we were going to get married in a church.

It was a profound question that punctuated all the fun. The thought had never crossed my mind. We had visions of an outdoor ceremony with the Rocky Mountains as the backdrop—no chapel necessary.

The truth is, I don't even remember the last time I set foot in a church other than to attend someone else's wedding. My parents would tell you we're "nondenominational" Christians, but religion—Sunday services, saying grace before dinner—wasn't part of my upbringing, and it wasn't a big part of my fiancé's either. It's never been a factor in my decision-making process, so naturally, it hadn't influenced my thinking on marriage.

But as I was about to reply to my friend with something to the effect of "Uh, have we met?" it dawned on me that it would never occur to a lot of people to *not* get married in a church. Traditionally, wedding ceremonies are structured around religion. In fact, upward of 80 percent of Americans tie the knot in a place of worship. Really, her question wasn't that preposterous. And in that moment I started to wonder who would

execute the ceremony if not someone from the clergy.

So as my fiancé and I tossed out ideas for an officiant, I couldn't help but consider the implications of having someone other than a pastor marry us. For many, getting married is not only a milestone that needs the church's stamp of approval, but it's also a union sanctified by God. In our case, the only approval we'd been concerned with was that of our family, our friends, and our own. But without the authority and reverence that underlies religious ceremonies, would ours lack a certain sacredness—that special, official feeling of being ordained by some greater power?

It's not that I don't believe in a higher power or that I don't understand how faith can be the glue of a marriage. It's just that these things haven't been meaningful to *our* relationship. When I think of what we're about to begin, I don't see us seeking guidance from a church or a god; I see us finding those things in each other.

My friend's question made us reflect on a decision about which others don't even have to think. In the end, though, it helped us appreciate our situation all the more. After all,

in Colorado we can marry ourselves if we want to—meaning we have the choice to create a ceremony that's as short on religion as we're comfortable with. So we'll find our mountaintop and get married—not under the auspices of any Bible verse, but under a wide-open sky in front of the people who've made us who we are. And that's all the blessing we need. —JULIE DUGDALE

