

INTERACTIVE WORKBOOK

# A Couple After God's Own Heart

*Building a Lasting, Loving  
Marriage Together*



JIM & ELIZABETH  
GEORGE

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**HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS**  
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## **A COUPLE AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART INTERACTIVE WORKBOOK**

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# Contents

## Before You Begin

### 1 Adam and Eve

*The Original Couple After God's Own Heart*

### 2 Abraham and Sarah

*Partners in Faith*

### 3 Isaac and Rebekah

*A Marriage Made in Heaven*

### 4 Jacob and Rachel

*Love that Lasts a Lifetime*

### 5 Manoah and His Wife

*Best Friends Forever*

### 6 Boaz and Ruth

*A Couple with Character*

### 7 David and Bathsheba

*Second-chance Marriage*

### 8 Zacharias and Elizabeth

*Partners with Pure Hearts*

### 9 Joseph and Mary

*A Couple in Crisis*

### 10 Aquila and Priscilla

*A Remarkable Husband-wife Team*

## Notes

## About the Authors

# Before You Begin



Welcome to this exciting, insightful Interactive Workbook. You are in for a treat! This workbook highlights and supplements the material in our book *A Couple After God's Own Heart*. And it focuses on *both of you* and your desire to be a couple after God's own heart. The scriptures and the exercises in this workbook, along with God's grace and blessings, will lead you toward your goal to build a better marriage—a marriage that lasts. Here's what you can look forward to:

- Each lesson features one couple in the Bible and practical applications you can start making right away. You'll also enjoy the take-away truths that will guide you day by day as you build your marriage.
- Each lesson is broken down into five days of material that is designed to make the best use of your time as a busy couple.
- Each lesson focuses equally on the husband and the wife, and provides a prayer to pray to seal into your hearts God's truths about marriage.

*Day 1* is a thought-provoking story of a modern-day couple you might have things in common with. You'll have an opportunity to analyze, criticize, or learn from the couple's actions and decisions. Then you'll get a good look at the featured couple from the Bible to see what decisions they made and how those choices affected their marriage.

*Days 2 and 3* provide a time for you *Together in God's Word* as you look at one of the couples in the Bible. Each day's lesson includes a section entitled *Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time*. Key messages are drawn from the Bible text for you to reflect on and apply to your marriage.

*Day 4* gives both husband and wife the opportunity to personalize Bible truths. The sections entitled *Lessons for Wives* and *Lessons for Husbands* are especially designed to help each of you with *Building a Marriage that Lasts*.

*Day 5* is all about *Wrapping Up Your Week*, giving you something to think about, something to talk about, and something to do.

It is our prayer that as you make your way through this workbook, you will draw closer together, become more open in your communication, and grow a stronger marriage relationship that is all you want your marriage to be. And most of all, our prayer is that yours is a marriage after God's own heart.

Along the way, don't forget to...

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.*

Proverbs 3:5-6



# 1

## Adam and Eve

### **The Original Couple After God's Own Heart**



#### **Day 1: Let's Talk!**

1. Read this story together and answer the questions addressed to you as a wife or husband.

It was time for Monday Night Football. Yes! Joe had taken over the family room and diligently prepared it for the big game. The guys at the office had been talking about this game for weeks, and had even set up an office pool for guessing which team would win and the amount of the point spread. Joe definitely had more than a casual interest in the game and the final score.

The game was well into the first quarter when Joe noticed, out the window, a neatly dressed couple on the sidewalk. It appeared they were headed toward his house. Joe thought to himself, *They must be with that religious group that's been going from house to house in our neighborhood this week. I sure hope they don't stop here—not now! Don't they know a lot of people are watching the game?*

Sure enough, the doorbell rang. Joe was in no mood to be interrupted. "Ellen!" Joe yelled into the kitchen. "Can you get the door? I'm kinda tied up here with this game right now."

Joe heard Ellen's sweet voice greet the couple at the door. He listened with one ear as the couple launched into their well-rehearsed speech. Then he heard his Ellie counter with something out of the Bible. Joe smiled and thought to himself, *This is good for Ellen. It's giving her a chance to share some of the things she's learning in that women's Bible study at church.*

Joe's attention was immediately drawn back to the game as his favorite team scored a touchdown. He leaped out of his La-Z-Boy recliner and threw his arms upward, signaling a touchdown. Sweet!

2. Think about the choices made by Joe and Ellen as you answer the following questions:

As a man and a husband, what are your thoughts about this story? How would you have handled this differently?

As a woman and a wife, what are your thoughts about this story? How would you have handled this differently?

3. In your book *A Couple After God's Own Heart*, read the opening story and answer these questions:

What was Adam doing in the garden—and what was he not doing?

What was Eve doing in the garden—and what was she not doing?

Think about Joe and Ellen in their scenario. What similarities do you see in their situation and in Adam and Eve's story?

***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

Just for today, what will you do as a husband to stay in touch with your wife?

Just for today, what will you do as a wife to stay in touch with your husband?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

Lord, I've obviously got a few things to think about. Help me to follow through on my desire to do a better job of keeping in touch with my partner in marriage today.

### **Day 2: Together in God's Word**

With your Bible in hand, begin working through the "What's Going On?" section in your book. Look up each Bible passage. Then read or review the comments and explanations.

1. *The Command:* Read Genesis 2:16-17 in your Bible. What did God specifically say Adam could do, and should not do?

What consequence did God tell Adam would occur if His instructions were not obeyed?

2. *The Creation:* Read Genesis 2:18-22. What observation did God make regarding the man in verse 18, and what was His perfect solution?

Briefly describe the creation of Adam's helper, Eve.

According to Genesis 2:24, what was God's perfect plan for a husband and wife?

3. *The Creature:* Read Genesis 3:1. Describe the serpent.

According to Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:3, what was the serpent's goal...and accomplishment?

What information does John add about the serpent in Revelation 12:9?

4. *The Confrontation*: Read Genesis 3:1 again. Who did the serpent choose to speak to, and what was his question?

### ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

Today's lesson includes four key messages to you about:

*Knowing God's instructions and commands*—They are all clearly stated in His Word, the Bible.

*Knowing your role and purpose as a husband and as a wife*—God created the man, Adam, to lead and the woman, Eve, to be his helper.

*Knowing your enemy*—The serpent is clever, crafty, and deceitful.

*Knowing your enemy's tactics*—His method is always the same; his goal is to cause you to doubt God's character and God's Word.

What difference does reading this information make in your life today...

...as a husband?

...as a wife?

...as a couple?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

Dear God, You created me in Your image and for Your purpose. Help me to understand and fulfill my role,

remembering to seek Your help in protecting me against the enemy of my soul.

### **Day 3: Together in God's Word**

With your Bible in hand, continue working through the "What's Going On?" section in your book. Look up each Bible passage. Then read or review the comments and explanations.

5. *The Conspiracy:* Read Genesis 3:4-5. What lie did the serpent boldly present to Eve?

6. *The Confusion:* Read Genesis 3:2-3.

What did Eve say to the serpent in verse 2?

What did Eve say to the serpent in verse 3?

What did God say to Adam in Genesis 2:17?

*The MacArthur Study Bible* surmises Eve's confusion "actually led her and Adam to spiritual death (separation from God)."<sup>1</sup>

7. *The Consequences:* Read Genesis 3:1-19. What led Eve to go ahead and eat the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?

She saw—

She desired—

She took—

She gave—

According to verse 7, what was the instant result?

After God confronted Adam and Eve, what question did He ask them in verse 11b?

What followed was a blaming session. Who did Adam blame for his sin, and what was the consequence of his sin (verses 12,17-19)?

Who did Eve blame for her sin, and what was the consequence of her sin (verses 13,16)?

What were the consequences of the serpent's lies and deception (verses 14-15)?

What was another consequence Adam and Eve faced for failing to listen to God's word and obey it (verses 23-24)?

### The Law of E.F. Hutton: Eve Speaks

Remember the old TV commercial? "When E.F. Hutton talks, people listen." Regardless of their titles, real leaders influence others. The story of Eve demonstrates the impact of negative influence. Although God commissioned Adam as her spiritual leader, Eve usurped the role of influencer. Adam followed his wife rather than God, and together they led humankind into sin.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Putting It All Together***

The perfection of God's creation was disrupted when Satan tempted Adam and Eve to disobey God and usurped His rule over their lives. When they gave in to this temptation—referred to as "the fall"—they damaged their relationship with God and were driven from the garden, away from the original blessing God intended for them. However, even in the midst of this calamity, God had already set in motion His long-term plan to redeem humanity and bring man back into an intimate relationship with Him.<sup>3</sup>

## ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

When the Bible describes the fall and the fallout of the fall, God is sending some strong and sobering messages to husbands and wives. As you look back over this lesson and the "Putting It All Together" summary above, what is God speaking to your heart today...

...as a husband?

...as a wife?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

God of all mercy, I praise You for Your compassion and grace in redeeming sinners, for making a way through Your Son to bring someone like me into an intimate relationship with You.

## **Day 4: Building a Marriage that Lasts**

### ***Lessons for Wives from Eve***

In a few sentences, jot down what you can take away from each of the following lessons from your study of Eve:

1. Remember your purpose—
2. Always ask—
3. Know your enemy—
4. Forgive your spouse—
5. Go on—

From your study of Adam and Eve, "The Original Couple After God's Own Heart," what is the Number One message God is sending to your heart that will help you as a wife to

build a better marriage? Write it here, and don't forget to share it with your husband.

### ***A Prayer for Your Husband***

Dear Lord, I'm so grateful to You for my marriage and for the wonderful husband You brought to me. Please give him energy and stamina as he works hard to provide for me and our family. Most of all, I ask that You continue to give him a love and hunger for Your Word as he leads our family in Your ways.

### ***Lessons for Husbands from Adam***

In a few words, jot down what you can take away from each of the following lessons from your study of Adam:

1. Remember your purpose—
2. Be available—
3. Be protective—
4. Be an encourager—

From your study of Adam and Eve, "The Original Couple After God's Own Heart," what is the Number One message God is sending to your heart that will help you as a husband to build a better marriage? Write it here, and don't forget to share it with your wife.

### ***A Prayer for Your Wife***

Dear Lord, thank You for giving me the wife You knew would be right for me. You knew what I would need to live a productive and useful life. Help me to lead her and be more vigilant in protecting her from the enemy. Keep her spiritually strong so she can fulfill Your will and be abundantly blessed.



## **Day 5: Wrapping Up Your Week**

### ***Something to Think About...***

Congratulations on a great beginning to your study of ten couples in the Bible and their messages to you as a husband, wife, and couple. Think about what it means to “do all God’s will” in your marriage, and what changes you will make to do your part in your goal to be a couple after God’s own heart.

### ***Something to Talk About...***

Adam and Eve really blew it! There is much to learn from their failures—lessons that can help you in your marriage. Talk about where they went wrong and how the two of you can keep from repeating their mistakes...

...as a husband

...as a wife

...as a couple

### ***Something to Do...***

On separate 3" x 5" cards, write out the area in which each of you want to work on your marriage.

- Swap cards for a week.
- Carry your spouse’s card with you all week and pray daily over the contents of the card.
- In a week, get an update.

## 2

# Abraham and Sarah

## Partners in Faith



### Day 1: Let's Talk!

1. Read this story together and answer the questions addressed to you as a wife or husband.

Bill and Judy had both grown up and lived their entire lives in Metropolis. It was the largest city in the state—a city that boasted all the cultural venues and activities they loved and appreciated. And, of course, there was the sports arena, which hosted their favorite basketball team. And they were fortunate enough to get season tickets again this year!

Best of all, both of their families lived in Metropolis. Judy's childhood desire had always been to live near her family. She was glad her older sister, Rita, and her growing family lived just around the corner. Why, Judy could even walk to Rita's house whenever she needed some girl time, kick-back time, or some sisterly advice on just about any subject. Oh, and their shopping sprees? The best! No, Judy had never had to worry about having a best friend. Her sis was her built-in BFF—they had and would always be best friends forever.

Bill was blessed as well to have lots of support from his family. He liked playing golf with his dad, going on an annual fishing trip to Montana with his three brothers, and going to his mom's traditional holiday get-togethers at his parents'

home, where he grew up. And when he needed advice or an opinion on just about anything under the sun, no problem—dad was right there, his go-to guy and mentor.

But one Friday at 4:00 pm, trouble arrived in paradise. Bill's boss called him into his office. Bill could tell right away that it wasn't bad news, because his boss looked elated. Sure enough, he had a promotion to offer to Bill. That was the good news. But then Bill's heart sank when he heard his new position would surely require him to move across the country. The company had a couple locations in mind, but wasn't sure yet which site they would assign Bill to.

Bill felt that he and Judy should go. But Judy was apprehensive about it and didn't want to go. In all honesty, she felt deep down that Bill was making a mistake. They didn't have children yet, and when they had them, Judy wanted them to be born surrounded by a large, warm, welcoming family. She wanted her kids to have the same growing-up experience she had enjoyed—with lots of family love. This move would mean Judy had to leave everything behind—all her dreams and friends, all the people she and Bill loved, all their very close family ties. Deeply torn over what they should do, they shared their dilemma as a prayer request in the young marrieds class on Sunday.

2. Think about the choices Bill and Judy must make.

As a man and a husband, what are your thoughts about this story? How would you handle a situation like this?

As a woman and a wife, what are your thoughts about this story? How would you handle a situation like this?

3. In your book *A Couple After God's Own Heart* read the (fictionalized) opening story about Abraham and Sarah and answer these questions:

What was Abraham's astonishing news to Sarah?

What was Sarah's natural response?

With Abraham and Sarah's situation in mind, think about Bill and Judy in their scenario. What similarities do you see between the two?

### ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

Just for today, as a husband, what important decisions are you and your wife facing?

Just for today, as a wife, how are you responding to any important decisions your husband is wanting to make—or has already made?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

Lord, I understand that life never stays the same. Today is not yesterday, and today is not tomorrow. Give me the wisdom and guidance I need just for today to make the choices that will honor You.

In every situation, God's advice is this: "Do not lean on your own understanding." Instead...

*Ask God*—Read His Word and pray. As you search the Scriptures and pray, God's will is made clearer and clearer. Refuse to make any decisions without first seeking the mind of God through the Bible and prayer.

*Ask wise believers*—When you have a major decision to make, turn to two or three Christian men, women, or couples whom you can count on to tell it to you like it is. They will most likely see the matter

clearly and give you straight answers. Who can you look to for godly counsel?

*Ask your spouse*—God has given your husband or wife to you as a sounding board—a helper, a life partner. So seek your partner’s input and prayers. Listen carefully. Your decision will affect you both!

### God’s Powerful Promise of Guidance

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5-6 NASB

## **Day 2: Together in God’s Word**

With your Bible in hand, begin working through the “What’s Going On?” section in your book. Look up each Bible passage, then read or review the comments and explanations.

1. *Meet Abraham and Sarah:* Read Genesis 11:29-31. What do you learn about Abraham in verse 29?

What do you learn about Sarah in verse 30?

2. *God’s Command:* Read Genesis 12:1. What were the three parts to God’s command?

What part of God’s command required Abraham’s faith?

3. *A Promise for the Future:* Read Genesis 12:2-3. Describe the elements of God’s promise to Abraham.

What additional insights on this promise do you gain from reading Acts 7:1-5?

4. *A Couple in Crisis*: Read Genesis 11:30. What was the crisis in Abraham and Sarah's marriage?

How do you think society looks at childlessness today?

***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

Today's lesson includes three key messages to you about God's involvement in your marriage:

God has a plan for you that He is fully aware of.

God's plan requires your faith and trust in Him.

God's couples are not immune from problems.

What difference does acknowledging this information make in your life today...

...as a husband?

...as a wife?

...as a couple?

He who trusts his own wisdom to guide him through life is a fool.

He is casting his anchor inside the boat, and thus will drift incessantly.

The one who looks to the Lord for guidance acts wisely.<sup>1</sup>

***A Prayer to Pray***

Dear God, thank You for Your plan for my life and marriage. Grant me the faith to accept and submit to Your plan, and to trust in Your full control over our crisis situations.

### **Day 3: Together in God's Word**

With your Bible in hand, continue working through the "What's Going On?" section in your book. Look up each Bible passage, then read or review the comments and explanations.

5. *Beauty and the Beast*: Read Genesis 12:10-20. How does the statement "two wrongs don't make a right" apply to this passage?

How would you rate Abraham's leadership of his family in this situation?

What do you think you would have done in this situation?

6. *Trouble in the Tent*: Scan through Genesis 16. How did Sarah decide to resolve her problem?

How would you rate Abraham's leadership of his family in this situation?

What was the outcome of Sarah's plan?

7. *Portraits in the Hall of Faith*: What is God's final word on Abraham's life in:

Hebrews 11:8-10—

Hebrews 11:17-19—

What is God's final word on Sarah's life in Hebrews 11:11?

### ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

Today's lesson sends three checkpoints to couples for managing life's challenges and crises:

Are you failing to seek God's advice even on issues that seem to have an obvious simple solution?

Are you in the habit of using a person-centered approach to fulfill God's will?

When it comes to problem situations, are you sometimes a negative influence on your marriage partner?

What difference should these warnings make in your life today...

...as a husband?

...as a wife?

### ***Putting It All Together***

God called Abraham to leave his home country and travel to the Promised Land, and told Abraham he would become the father of His chosen people. Though Abraham was childless and old, God said he would have many descendants who would form a great nation, a people through whom salvation will come. This promise was fulfilled in Abraham's greatest descendant, Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

God, I know I will face many decisions today. Help me to resist the temptation to rely on my own abilities, and instead turn to You and take advantage of Your availability.

## **Day 4: Building a Marriage that Lasts**

### ***Lessons for Wives from Sarah***

In a few sentences, jot down what you can take away from each of the following lessons from your study of Sarah:



1. Follow your man—
2. Beware of your great ideas—
3. Be a team player—
4. Learn to live without—
5. Focus on long-term faith—

From your study of Abraham and Sarah, “Partners in Faith,” what is the Number One message God is sending to your heart that will help you as a wife to build a better marriage? Write it here, and don’t forget to share it with your husband.

### ***A Prayer for Your Husband***

Father, I pray for my husband to be a strong leader for me and our family. Give him wisdom and faith as together we seek to live according to Your will and Your ways.

### ***Lessons for Husbands from Abraham***

In a few words, jot down what you can take away from each of the following lessons from your study of Abraham:

1. Love unconditionally—
2. Love your family—
3. Worship with a whole heart—
4. Manage your resources—
5. Focus forward by faith—

From your study of Abraham and Sarah, “Partners in Faith,” what is the Number One message God is sending to your heart that will help you as a husband to build a better

marriage? Write it here, and don't forget to share it with your wife.

### ***A Prayer for Your Wife***

Lord God, my wife is such a blessing! I want to be Your kind of leader for her in both big things and small. Help me be a wise leader who is full of faith. Keep her faith strong as she follows me, while I seek to follow You with all my heart. Lead us as a couple to Your perfect will.

## **Day 5: Wrapping Up Your Week**

### ***Something to Think About...***

Abraham and Sarah's faith in God was rigorously tested. But as time went on their faith grew. Faith is like a muscle that must be exercised so it can grow. List some ways you can contribute to growing stronger in your trust in God. Don't forget to share them with your partner in faith.

### ***Something to Talk About...***

What are you facing today that requires greater trust in God...

...as a couple?

...as a husband?

...as a wife?

### ***Something to Do...***

On separate 3" x 5" cards, write out the area in which each of you have the toughest time trusting God.

- Swap cards for a week.
- Carry your spouse's card with you all week and pray daily over the contents of the card.

- In a week, get an update.

# 3

## Isaac and Rebekah

### **A Marriage Made in Heaven**

#### **Day 1: Let's Talk!**

1. Read this story together and answer the questions addressed to you as a wife or husband.

The special New Year's Eve service was marvelous. It was filled with singing, the sharing of testimonies, a thrilling—and funny at times—multimedia presentation of highlights from the year, and a special word of challenge from Pastor Jon on making the new year count for Christ. Then it concluded with a time of personal prayer and reflection. Yes, it was a great time.

Immediately after midnight, those who could do so stayed for refreshments. Later, as the last remnants of people waved good-bye, calling out, "Happy New Year! Have a good one!" Wade and Angela filled two cups with the last of the punch, clinked cups, smiled at each other, and in unison, said to each other, "Happy New Year." Then they gathered up the punch bowl, the last of the trash and food items, and headed for the church kitchen.

When they had volunteered to clean up after the service, they looked forward to it as a date night. So, while they swept up, wiped down, washed and dried and put away the dishes, they talked and laughed as they recalled memories of the year gone by...and they shared their dreams for the

new year. At last, Wade locked the church doors and they walked to their car. Whoa, was it ever chilly outside, even for Texas!

As Wade slowly drove through their small town and passed underneath the town's only traffic signal, from out of nowhere came a heavy-duty pickup. It ran through the flashing red light that signaled for him to stop, and slammed into the side of Wade and Angela's car. The pickup, which had been speeding, hurled the small car into the brick wall of the bank on the corner. Having partied in the new year at the town's only bar, the driver was oblivious to what had happened.

When Wade regained consciousness, he discovered he was still strapped into their overturned car. He looked over at Angela, who was also still buckled in. He groaned as he reached to punch the release button of his safety belt, and when it snapped open, he fell to the roof of their car. He reached over to do the same for Angela, but the seat belt wouldn't budge! Then Wade smelled the gas fumes and caught sight of a small flame that was flickering just a couple feet away. Desperately, Wade tried to release Angela's seat belt, but with no success. "Leave me, Wade! Leave me—hurry!" she cried.

Seeing his efforts were useless, Wade crawled out the broken window and started yelling and looking around for help. The pickup driver had passed out from his night of revelry and couldn't be roused. Angela feebly tried to shout for help as well, but the town responded with stark silence. Seeing no one was there to help, Wade made his decision.

Bending down next to the car, he cradled Angela's head in his arms, steadying her to make her comfortable. No one was there to witness Wade's ultimate act of love as the flames engulfed the vehicle and he whispered, "I'm right here. I'm not leaving, baby. I love you."

2. Think about the predicament Wade and Angela found themselves in as you answer the following questions:

As a man and a husband, what are your thoughts about this story?

How do you think Wade would have defined love?

As a woman and a wife, what are your thoughts about this story?

How do you think Angela would have defined love?

3. Read Genesis 26:1-9. What differences do you see in Wade and Angela's situation and in Isaac and Rebekah's story?

### ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

Just for today, what will you do as a husband to demonstrate your love for your wife?

Just for today, what will you do as a wife to demonstrate your love for your husband?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

Father of love, You demonstrated Your love for me, a sinner, through the sacrifice of Your Son and my Savior, Jesus Christ. Give me the grace to be more sacrificial in my love for others, beginning with my spouse.

## Traditional Christian Wedding Vows

### For the Husband

To my wedded wife: I do promise and covenant before God and these witnesses to be thy loving and faithful husband—

in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, as long as we both shall live.

### For the Wife

To my wedded husband: I do promise and covenant before God and these witnesses to be thy loving and faithful wife—in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, as long as we both shall live.

## **Day 2: Together in God's Word**

With your Bible in hand, begin working through the “What’s Going On?” section in your book. Look up each Bible passage, then read or review the comments and explanations.

1. *A Father's Concern for His Son:* Read Genesis 24:1-4 in your Bible. What was Abraham's concern for his son, Isaac, and what was his solution?

2. *A Marriage Made in Heaven:* Scan through Genesis 24:5-62. How did Abraham demonstrate his faith when his servant, Eliezer, doubted the desired success of his mission (verse 7)?

When Eliezer prayed about his assignment, what specifics did he ask for from God (verses 12-14)?

What happened immediately (verses 15-20)?

Skim through Genesis 24:21-61 and summarize in a few sentences the marriage agreement. What did Eliezer conclude in verse 27?

3. *A Man Loves a Woman:* Read Genesis 24:61-67. Describe this dramatic love scene and imagine Eliezer's thoughts and how Isaac and Rebekah felt.

4. *A Fairy Tale with a Problem...and a Solution:* Read Genesis 25:19-21. What was the problem Isaac and Rebekah experienced?

How did Isaac handle this problem...and what was the solution?

### ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

Today's lesson includes key messages to you about:

The role of parents in finding a future mate for their children

The role of prayer in finding a future mate for your children

The value of praying for specifics regarding a marriage partner

The knowledge that no marriage is immune from problems

What difference does reading this information make in your life today...

...as a husband?

...as a wife?

...as a parent?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

O Lord God, finding the ideal marriage partner is a miracle! Thank You for working that miracle in my life and guiding me to my beloved. Open my eyes to more ways to



demonstrate greater love to my spouse today...and every day.

### **Day 3: Together in God's Word**

With your Bible in hand, continue working through the "What's Going On?" section in your book. Look up each Bible passage, then read or review the comments and explanations.

5. *A Failure to Communicate:* Read Genesis 25:21-34. It doesn't appear that the information God gave to Rebekah about her and Isaac's sons was ever passed on to Isaac. Look now at Judges 13:1-6 and comment on Manoah's wife's response to God's message about their child-to-be. What is this difference "communicating" to you?

6. *A Family of Favorites:* Read Genesis 25:24-28.

Who was Isaac's favorite twin, and why?

Who was Rebekah's favorite twin, and why?

7. *A Family Likeness:* Read Genesis 26:1-11. This lesson began with a story of sacrificial love. You've already seen how Isaac protected himself and put Rebekah at risk. Now glance over Genesis 12:10-20 and 20:1-3.

As a husband, what are your thoughts about this father and son's lack of concern for their wives?

As a wife, what are your thoughts?

8. *Bonus Question—a Dysfunctional Family in Action:* Needless to say, Genesis 27:1-28:10 reveals heartbreaking facts about what led to the shattering of Isaac and Rebekah's marriage and family. Looking back over this

lesson, what did Isaac and Rebekah do that contributed to the dysfunctional nature of their home and family?

### ***Putting It All Together***

Isaac had a special bond with Esau, while Rebekah clearly favored Jacob. These preferences caused strife between Isaac and Rebekah and may have encouraged the poor choices and flawed personalities of each brother...When we play favorites and give special treatment or extra attention to a mother, father, child, or sibling, we invite friction into our homes and cause emotional hurt in those we slight.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

As you look back over this lesson and the "Putting It All Together" summary above, what is God's message to your heart today...

...as a husband?

...as a wife?

...as a parent?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, my heart's desire is to communicate freely with my spouse and that there be no barriers between us. Thank You that ours is a marriage made in heaven. Guide us to keep it that way.

## **Day 4: Building a Marriage that Lasts**

### ***Lessons for Wives from Rebekah***

In a few sentences, jot down what you can take away from each of the following lessons from your study of Rebekah:

1. Character counts—
2. Child-centered parenting endangers your marriage and family—
3. Believe the promises of God—
4. Review your role as a wife often—

From your study of Isaac and Rebekah, “A Marriage Made in Heaven,” what is the Number One message God is sending to your heart that will help you as a wife to build a better marriage? Write it here, and don’t forget to share it with your husband.

### ***A Prayer for Your Husband***

Dear Lord, I pray that my husband will feel free to share his emotions and concerns with me. Bind us together in a mutual desire to guard against anything that would divide us. May our marriage please You, bring You honor, and grow stronger with each passing year.

### ***Lessons for Husbands from Isaac***

In a few words, jot down what you can take away from each of the following lessons from your study of Isaac:

1. Gentleness is strength under control—
2. Tap into the power of prayer—
3. Emotions are a good thing—
4. Love needs direction—

From your study of Isaac and Rebekah, who had a marriage made in heaven, what is the Number One message God is sending to your heart that will help you as a husband to build a better marriage? Write it here, and don't forget to share it with your wife.

### ***A Prayer for Your Wife***

I pray, dear God, that my wife will continue to grow in her love for You. Thank You for her blossoming faith, which reveals itself in her character and her trust in Your will.

## **Day 5: Wrapping Up Your Week**

### ***Something to Think About...***

Many couples lose sight of the fact that God views marriage as binding. Wedding vows speak repeatedly of self-sacrifice and "being there" for the other person. How are you doing in this department—in being there for your spouse? And what can you do for improvement?

### ***Something to Talk About...***

Something divided Isaac and Rebekah's love for each other. Take a close look at your marriage and identify any potential threats to you...

...as a couple

...as a husband

...as a wife

### ***Something to Do...***

On separate 3" x 5" cards, write out the area of biggest concern for yourselves as a couple.

- Swap cards for a week.

- Carry your spouse's card with you all week and pray daily over the contents of the card.
- In a week, get an update.

# 4

## Jacob and Rachel

### **Love that Lasts a Lifetime**



#### **Day 1: Let's Talk!**

1. Read this story together and answer the questions addressed to you as a wife or husband.

Robert moved into what would soon become his new hometown. Too bad the local steel mill in an even smaller town where Robert had worked had closed its doors. With no job and very little money, Robert began looking for work and trying to fit into his new place of residence. His mom had always told him, “Good things happen to those who go to church.” And, sure enough, just as dear ol’ mom said, love’s thunderbolt struck Robert right there at the church he visited on his first Sunday. Her name was Nancy, and they immediately hit it off. There was no doubt—Nancy was definitely the girl for Robert.

With a little pretraining in a specialty field, Robert soon found a job. And his relationship with Nancy blossomed as they found more and more things in common. Soon affection turned to love, and the day arrived when Robert went to visit Nancy’s dad, Greg, to ask permission to propose to Nancy. Her dad liked Robert right away, and not only gave his blessing to the marriage, but surprise—he offered Robert a job!

Robert and Nancy have now been married almost ten years. Over those years Robert has accepted financial help from Greg. Everything is good...except her parents are now so strongly entwined with their daughter and him, their son-in-law, that every time Robert wants to make a decision on just about anything, the in-laws feel they have the right to step in and add their “two cents” (or in their case, “mega cents”!) worth of advice.

Things came to a head one day when Robert privately shared with Nancy that he had his eye on a new job in another state. Nancy, of course, then shared this news with her mom and dad...who, of course, dove in full force with opinions, objections, advice, and even the offer of a new house for them if Robert would stay at his job at Greg’s business.

In the meantime, Robert was hurt and disappointed that Nancy had gone immediately to her parents with the news of a possible move rather than be his wife and confidante. All he had wanted was to bounce the idea off her, to have a sounding board. He was looking forward to praying together with her about this job offer, and the two of them making a joint decision about what was best for them.

2. Think about the choices made by Robert and Nancy, and what happened.

As a man and a husband, what are your thoughts about this story? How would you have handled this differently?

As a woman and a wife, what are your thoughts about this story? How would you have handled this differently?

3. Read Genesis 31:1-7 and 26-29. As an update, remember that Jacob served his father-in-law a total of 20 years.

What was Jacob preparing to do?

Now read Genesis 31:14-16. What was Rachel and Leah's attitude toward their father, Laban, regarding his dealings with Jacob?

Think about Robert and Nancy in their scenario. What similarities do you see in their situation and in Jacob and Rachel's story?

### ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

Just for today, as a son-in-law, how would you view your relationship with your in-laws?

Just for today, what will you do as a wife to stay in touch with your husband's parents and to ensure that your parents aren't overly influencing your marriage and family?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

Lord, thank You for my parents and the part they have played in my life, for which I am grateful. Help me balance my love for them with my love for my spouse and children.

## **Day 2: Together in God's Word**

With your Bible in hand, begin working through the "What's Going On?" section in your book. Look up each Bible passage, then read or review the comments and explanations.

1. *Love at First Sight:* Read Genesis 29:1-12 in your Bible. What do you learn about Rachel in these verses?

What was Jacob's first response to meeting Rachel, a relative, after his long journey?

2. *A Dowry Is Set:* Read Genesis 29:15-18. Describe the back-and-forth negotiations for Jacob's employment by



Laban.

Describe the two sisters.

Which sister did Jacob wish to marry, and what dowry price was set?

3. *The Power of Love:* Read Genesis 29:18-21. What was Laban's attitude about Jacob marrying his daughter Rachel?

What was Jacob's attitude about the seven years he had to work so he could marry Rachel?

Jacob waited seven years to marry the love of his life, Rachel. What are your thoughts on a seven-year-long engagement?

4. *The Deceiver Is Deceived:* Read Genesis 29:21-30. How was Jacob's contract to marry Rachel altered by Laban?

How do the events in this passage illustrate the saying, "What goes around comes around"?

Now look at Galatians 6:7. What does God have to say about sowing and reaping?

Question for thought: What kinds of seeds are you sowing in your marriage and family relationships?

### ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

Today's lesson includes four key messages:

A solid marriage must be built on more than physical attraction.

True love is worthy and worth working for.

What you do to others, including sin and deception, will more than likely be returned to you.

Mixing business and family can be problematic.

What difference do these principles make in your life today...

...as a husband?

...as a wife?

...as a couple?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

God of all wisdom, thank You for family and their place in my marriage. Fill my heart with love for our parents, and show me the best way to love them. Guide me with Your wisdom as I handle family issues.

### **Day 3: Together in God's Word**

With your Bible in hand, continue working through the "What's Going On?" section in your book. Look up each Bible passage, then read or review the comments and explanations.

5. *Be Careful What You Wish For:* Scan through Genesis 29:31–30:34. According to Genesis 30:1, what was Rachel's problem, and how did it affect her attitude toward her husband, Jacob?

How did Jacob respond to Rachel's outburst?

What was Rachel's solution to her problem (30:3-5)?

6. *A Family Without a Spiritual Leader:* Take a moment to skim very quickly through Genesis 31–35. These

disheartening chapters reveal a couple caught up in chaos. Here you will get your fill of lying, deception, envy, jealousy, bickering, treachery, murder, and idolatry. List some of the things that happened in...

Genesis 30:4,9—

Genesis 31:19—

Genesis 34:30-31—

Genesis 35:22—

How would you describe Jacob's spiritual leadership during this time period?

### ***Putting It All Together***

Jacob's life of chaos began in Canaan, in his own dysfunctional family, and then extended to his new family in Haran. There he married two women and fathered over a dozen children with his wives and two of their maids. Jacob's father-in-law lied and cheated, and his wives—Rachel and Leah—lied, connived, and were filled with bitterness, jealousy, and envy. Jacob's lack of leadership continued to plague his descendants for centuries to come. All this family had to hang on to was God's promise to bless Jacob. Every family—including yours—has its times of chaos, but our comfort is knowing that God's promises overrule our failures.

### Reaping God's Blessings

A quip states, "If you don't like what you are reaping, change what you are sowing." Perhaps you know that some things aren't quite right in your home. You know that somehow your spiritual growth (or lack of it) is connected with what's not quite right in your life and marriage. But,

with all of the pressures of family and job, you can't seem to "fit in" growing in the Lord. So you struggle on. Why not commit right now to grow in the Lord? That's where you must start. It will require work, but oh, the blessings that await you! <sup>1</sup>

### ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

As you consider all that happened in Jacob and Rachel's marriage and family life, there are some strong and sobering messages you can learn as a husband and wife. Look back over this lesson and the "Putting It All Together" summary above. How is God prompting your heart today...

...as a husband?

...as a wife?

...as a couple?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

God of all peace, during times of chaos in my marriage and family, remind me that You are there to quell the storms and calm the rough waters. Help me to recall Your promise to work all things for my good and Your good pleasure. Therefore, I need not be anxious.

## **Day 4: Building a Marriage that Lasts**

### ***Lessons for Wives from Rachel***

In a few sentences, jot down what you can take away from each of the following lessons from your study of Rachel:

1. When you must wait, be useful—
2. Your inner beauty matters most—

3. Fuel your faith daily—

4. Have an attitude of gratitude—

From your study of Jacob and Rachel, “Love that Lasts a Lifetime,” what is the Number One message God is sending to your heart that will help you as a wife to build a better marriage? Write it here, and don’t forget to share it with your husband.

### ***A Prayer for Your Husband***

O Lord God, I pray that my husband will always be unselfish with his time, talents, and money so that many are blessed—that he will lead his family spiritually so that we are blessed at home.

### ***Lessons for Husbands from Jacob***

In a few words, jot down what you can take away from each of the following lessons from your study of Jacob:

1. Let your wife in on the real you—

2. “Practice looking out for the interests of others”—

3. Know who’s Number One—

4. Be the spiritual leader you were meant to be—

5. Remember, united you stand, divided you fall.

From your study of Jacob and Rachel, “Love that Lasts a Lifetime,” what is the Number One message God is sending to your heart that will help you as a husband to build a better marriage? Write it here, and don’t forget to share it with your wife.

### ***A Prayer for Your Wife***

Lord, I pray that my wife will always cultivate her inner beauty, knowing it will please You and bless others. Help her to have an attitude of gratitude, knowing that in You she has everything she needs for her present situation.

## **Day 5: Wrapping Up Your Week**

### ***Something to Think About...***

God, by His very nature, is the source of all peace, stability, and love. Therefore, when chaos is a part of your marriage and home life, who is to blame?

As a husband, what do I think is causing the chaos, and how am I contributing to it?

As a wife, what do I think is causing the chaos, and how am I contributing to it?

As a parent, what do I think is causing the chaos, and how am I contributing to it?

### ***Something to Talk About...***

Marriage is fraught with challenges. Can you think of a key challenge from the past that was resolved successfully? Discuss what helped lead to the positive resolution.

### ***Something to Do...***

On separate 3" x 5" cards, write out what areas or issues you think are keeping your marriage and home from being a haven of rest.

- Swap cards for a week.
- Carry your spouse's card with you all week and pray daily over the contents of the card.
- In a week, get an update.

# 5

## Manoah and His Wife

### **Best Friends Forever**



#### **Day 1: Let's Talk!**

1. Read this story together and answer the questions addressed to you as a wife or husband.

Believe it or not, Stan and Maria met by “accident” at a statewide singles conference sponsored by their church denomination. During a break between sessions, Stan once again stopped by the bookstore on the conference campus—it was his third visit in only the first two days of lectures. And again, as on his other visits, he noticed the same woman browsing the books.

Stan reached deep and mustered up his courage, walked over to her, and introduced himself. After a minute or two of exchanging names, general information, and small talk, Stan commented that he had seen her repeatedly at the bookstore.

Then the two book lovers were off and running, sharing their common interests in reading, their favorite authors, and the topics they liked best. Books about God’s Word were the springboard for a budding friendship. And it wasn’t too hard to fan the flame of their relationship, especially after they realized they lived about an hour’s drive apart.

Whatever it was—their compatibility, their mutual interest in books, their desire to grow spiritually, the joy

they experienced when they were together—a bond of love began to develop and they became best friends. And amazingly, marriage didn't diminish their closeness. Even years later, and several children and one grandchild later, they are still BFFs. They haven't let anything—or anyone—interfere with being best friends forever.

What has kept Stan and Maria's friendship so fresh and vibrant? If you asked them, they would tell you that a close friend challenged them on the eve of their wedding: "Go on a date each week, and talk everything over. Leave nothing out and have no secrets. And have an overnight getaway every four months, no matter what. These two commitments will keep your marriage and friendship alive and well for life!"

"Aren't you glad we were lucky enough to get such good advice for our marriage?" Stan mused as Maria snuggled into his arm while they strolled down the boardwalk toward the little cottage they were staying in that night.

2. Think about the choices Stan and Maria made in their relationship.

As a man and a husband, what are your thoughts about this story? What ideas here could you apply to your marriage?

As a woman and a wife, what are your thoughts about this story? What ideas here could you apply to your marriage?

3. In your book *A Couple After God's Own Heart*, read the opening story and answer these questions:

What were some of the circumstances that drew Manoah and his wife together?



Think about Stan and Maria in their scenario. What similarities and differences do you see in their situation and in Mr. and Mrs. Manoah's story?

### ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

Just for today, what will you do as a husband to foster friendship with your wife?

Just for today, what will you do as a wife to foster friendship with your husband?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

Heavenly Father, Your Word teaches us the importance of friends and friendship. Who better to have as a friend than my partner for life? "This is my beloved; this is my friend."

### **Day 2: Together in God's Word**

With your Bible in hand, begin working through the "What's Going On?" section in your book. Look up each Bible passage, then read or review the comments and explanations.

1. *Israel's Disobedience*: Read Judges 13:1 in your Bible. How is Israel's disobedience described?

What was the consequence of their sin?

2. *Angelic Appearance #1*: Read Judges 13:2-5. How does the Bible refer to the visitor?

List the instructions for the boy given by the angel of the Lord.

3. *Trusted Friend and Wife*: Read Judges 13:6-8. What was the woman's first response after receiving the angel's

instruction?

Compare the angel's instructions in verses 4-5 with the woman's version of the instructions. What did she leave out (verses 6-7)?

What was Manoah's first response (verse 8)?

4. *Angelic Appearance #2*: Read Judges 13:9-12. When God answered Manoah's prayer, what two questions did Manoah ask?

### ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

Today's lesson includes four key messages to you:

God's call can come at any time and in any place.

Open communication is essential in a marriage relationship.

Couples should complement each other, not compete.

Seek God's direction in both the small and the large things.

What difference does this information make in your life today...

...as a husband?

...as a wife?

...as a couple?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

Dear God, may we as a couple always be quick to share our lives with each other. Purify our hearts daily so we may be vessels for Your use.

### **Day 3: Together in God's Word**

With your Bible in hand, continue working through the "What's Going On?" section in your book. Look up each Bible passage, then read or review the comments and explanations.

5. *A Second Round of Instructions:* Read Judges 13:13-14. How did the Angel of the Lord begin this round of instruction (verse 13)?

How did the Angel of the Lord end his instruction?

6. *A Final Realization:* Read Judges 13:15-24. In keeping with Middle Eastern hospitality, Manoah offered the stranger food. What was the stranger's countersuggestion (verses 15-16)?

Manoah asked for the stranger's name. What answer was he given (verses 17-18)?

Read Genesis 16:10-13 about a different visit by the Angel of the Lord, and comment on the angel's authority to bless Hagar.

When you read or hear an answer like this, who do you think of?

7. *A Faithful Set of Parents:* Skim through Judges 13:24-14:10. What were God's comments concerning Samson's early years (13:24)?

What act indicated that Samson was choosing to go his own way (14:1-2)?

How did Samson's parents respond (verse 3)?

### ***Putting It All Together***

Manoah and his wife were a special couple. This was made obvious by the Angel of the Lord's visit. God singled them out for service during a time of spiritual decline and moral darkness—a time when everyone did what was right in their own eyes (Judges 21:25). Yet in this dark age, this couple shone brightly as a godly pair who desired to do God's will. When visited by a divine messenger, they worked together to call on God for guidance and understanding regarding how they were to fulfill their responsibilities as parents of this unique child. They provide a stellar example of how you as a couple should function together, doing all God's will as a couple after God's own heart.

### ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

In the account about Manoah and his wife, who were also best friends, there are some strong and sobering messages for husbands and wives. As you look back over this lesson and the "Putting It All Together" summary above, how is God prompting your heart today...

...as a husband?

...as a wife?

...as a parent?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

God, we live in a time when everyone does what is right in their own eyes. Strengthen us by Your Spirit as we read Your Word so that we can be a couple whose light shines in a dark world.

## **Day 4: Building a Marriage that Lasts**

### ***Lessons for Wives from Manoah's Wife***

In a few sentences, jot down what you can take away from each of the following lessons from your study of Manoah's wife:

1. Trusting God is a daily choice—
2. Be the helper you were meant to be—
3. Remember your priorities—
4. Aim for faith for the big—and little—things in life—

From your study of Manoah and his wife, "Best Friends Forever," what is the Number One message God is sending to your heart that will help you as a wife to build a better marriage? Write it here, and don't forget to share it with your husband.

### ***A Prayer for Your Husband***

Lord God Almighty, may my husband's first response to any situation be one of prayer—prayer for wisdom and guidance to make right decisions to lead our family in the paths of righteousness.

### ***Lessons for Husbands from Manoah***

In a few words, jot down what you can take away from each of the following lessons from your study of Manoah:

1. Live and lead with confidence—
2. Make a rule to pray about everything—
3. Respond to God's will in faith—

#### 4. Leading requires getting the facts straight—

From your study of Manoah and his wife, “Best Friends Forever,” what is the Number One message God is sending to your heart that will help you as a husband to build a better marriage? Write it here, and don’t forget to share it with your wife.

#### ***A Prayer for Your Wife***

Father, thank You for giving me the opportunity to have a best friend in my wife. Don’t let her give up on me in her efforts to communicate with me and assist me in providing leadership for our family.

### **Day 5: Wrapping Up Your Week**

#### ***Something to Think About...***

As a childless couple, Manoah and his wife were perfectly content with each other. They lived simply and had little. Yet they found favor with God. Of all the couples on earth, God chose them to bring forth a judge to help deliver His people. Why do you think this sweet couple found favor with God, and how can you emulate them?

#### ***Something to Talk About...***

We find in Manoah and his wife a couple of true character. How was their character revealed in these three basic areas of life, and what can you learn from them?

Relationship with God—

Marriage—

Parenting—

#### ***Something to Do...***

On separate 3" x 5" cards, write out which of the three areas above needs more of your attention.

- Swap cards for a week.
- Carry your spouse's card with you all week and pray daily over the contents of the card.
- In a week, get an update.

# 6

## Boaz and Ruth

### A Couple with Character



#### Day 1: Let's Talk!

1. Read this story together and answer the questions addressed to you as a wife or husband.

Jason was a confirmed bachelor—or at least that's what he kept telling himself. But in years past, he had thought he would be married by this time and have a half-dozen kids. He had not wanted to stay single, and he didn't shy away from the idea of marriage. He just hadn't met the right woman, and it wasn't because Jason was too picky. He knew the standards God set in His Word for a wife, and he wanted to be careful. One of his favorite verses in the Bible was Proverbs 31:10—"Who can find a virtuous wife?" And his daily prayer was, "Where is she, Lord?"

Yes, Jason had held out all these years for a woman whose life followed the example set by the Proverbs 31 woman. He still remembered when the pastor of his college Bible study group took the guys through Proverbs 31. *Wow, that's some lady!* Jason thought. He remembered the guys' reaction to her—this woman must be some sort of alien! Yeah, Jason had laughed right along with them. But he couldn't shake the picture those few verses in the Bible painted of the kind of life-partner who could help him be all he wanted to be as God's man and a godly husband.



So far, God's standard had kept Jason single. But that was all about to change. One night in May, Alice made her first visit to the career singles Bible study. She seemed to possess genuine grace and humility. She also seemed more mature and sober-minded than the other women in the group. Jason couldn't help but notice her.

Over the next few months, Jason heard various reports about Alice's background, her personality, her reputation, and her character. Word had it that her soldier-husband had been killed in battle in Afghanistan. She had relocated to the city where her husband had grown up when her mother-in-law suffered a mild stroke and needed help. Alice took on the role of caregiver, along with taking on two jobs so she could support the two of them.

*Wow, that's some lady!* Jason thought.

After much prayer, Jason carefully started making casual conversation with Alice at the Bible study. Then one night he invited her out for dessert after the study. After spending time with her on a regular basis, Jason thought she just might be "the one"—the right woman. In fact, he *wanted* her to be the right one, but he still wanted to be careful.

Uncertain of what he should do, Jason decided to seek advice.

2. Think about Jason's situation and the choices he can make:

As a man and a husband, what are your thoughts about this story? How would you advise Jason?

As a woman and a wife, what are your thoughts about this story? What advice would you give to Jason?

3. Read "A Look at the Backstory" in your book *A Couple After God's Own Heart*, then read Ruth 3:1-14 in your Bible.

What similarities do you see in Jason and Alice's scenario and in Boaz and Ruth's story?

### ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

Just for today, as a couple, recount how you met and how you determined that the two of you were meant to marry. Also share about the character qualities you admired in each other that helped guide you toward making that important decision.

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

Dear Lord, create a deeper desire in me to do what it takes to live out godly character qualities. Give me the courage to live out these qualities before a watching world.

## **Day 2: Together in God's Word**

With your Bible in hand, begin working through the "What's Going On?" section in your book. Look up each Bible passage, then read or review the comments and explanations.

1. *The Famine and Funerals:* Read Ruth 1:1-5 and briefly describe the events reported in these verses.

According to the text, how long had Naomi and her family lived in Moab?

2. *The Farewells and the Faith of Ruth:* Read Ruth 1:6-18. What was Naomi's first decision after the deaths of her sons (verses 6-7)?

After Naomi thought through her desire to take her daughters-in-law with her, what did she propose for the young widows (verses 8-9)?

What happened next with the daughters-in-law (verses 10-15)?

Orpah—

Ruth—

List the elements of Ruth's commitment to Naomi (verses 16-18):

Verse 16—

Verse 17—

3. *The Encounter with Boaz*: Read Ruth 2:1-7. Two women, Ruth and Naomi, made the 60- to 70-mile trip back to Bethlehem, which required about seven to ten days of travel. They arrived there in the spring, just in time for the barley harvest. What did Ruth suggest she do to help them survive?

Whose field did Ruth “happen” to enter (verse 3)?

How does Boaz's greeting to his workers suggest he is a man of character?

How is Ruth described when Boaz inquires about her (verse 6)?

4. *The Encouragement to Ruth*: Read Ruth 2:8-17. What did Boaz suggest to Ruth in verse 8?

What additional help did Boaz offer to Ruth (verse 9)?

What was Ruth's reaction to Boaz's offer to provide and protect?

What was Boaz's reason for making this offer to Ruth (verses 11-12)?

What additional attention did Boaz give Ruth (verses 14-17)?

5. *The Praise of Naomi*: Read Ruth 2:18-23. How did Naomi describe Boaz?

What advice did Naomi give Ruth (verses 20-22)?

### ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

Think back through today's lesson and see how many character qualities you can list for:

Boaz—

Ruth—

What difference does acknowledging this information make in your life today...

...as a husband?

...as a wife?

...as a couple?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

Dear God, when I think of Your perfection and Your attributes, it is more than I can comprehend. In my heart I long to mature in my knowledge of You so that I reflect more of Your character.

## **Day 3: Together in God's Word**

With your Bible in hand, continue working through the “What’s Going On?” section in your book. Look up each Bible passage, then read or review the comments and explanations.

6. *The Plan:* Read Ruth 3:1-5.  
Naomi’s concern (verse 1)—

Boaz’s routine (verse 2)—

Ruth’s part (verses 3-4)—

Ruth’s compliance (verse 5)—

7. *The Proposal and the Problem:* Read Ruth 3:6-13. When did Ruth approach Boaz?

What announcement did Ruth make to Boaz in verse 9?

And what was Boaz’s reply (verse 11)?

The word “excellent” or “virtuous” is used only four times in the Bible to describe godly women. Note what is said in each of these verses:

Proverbs 12:4—

Proverbs 31:10—

Proverbs 31:29—

What statement did Boaz make in his conversation with Ruth in verse 13?

8. *The Precaution and Provision:* Read Ruth 3:14-18. Describe the scene between Boaz and Ruth in the early morning (verses 14-15).

Now describe the scene between Ruth and Naomi when Ruth returned home (verses 16-18).

9. *The Decision Is Made:* Read Ruth 4:1-12. Briefly describe this official meeting and legal negotiation involving the kinsman who was closest in lineage to Naomi and Ruth (verses 1-6).

In the end, why did this kinsman decline his responsibility to Ruth (verse 6)?

How did the outcome of the meeting and negotiations benefit...

...Naomi (verse 9)?

...Ruth (verse 10)?

...Boaz (verses 9-10)?

10. *The Dynasty Begins:* Read Ruth 4:13-22. What blessed event is described in verse 13, and how did the women bless Naomi in verses 14-15?

What great blessing did Naomi enjoy in verse 16?

Who was Ruth's great-grandson, according to verse 22?

### ***Putting It All Together***

The story of Ruth and Naomi has a wonderful ending. But they faced many difficulties along the way. They had to journey long and far, leaving everything behind in Moab. When they arrived in Bethlehem, they were destitute—they didn't even have food or funds. Life looked bleak indeed. They had no idea how things would turn out.

Is there anything in your life that looks bleak right now... that gives the appearance of no hope? Notice Ruth didn't sit

around—she took action. In doing so, her godly character and initiative were noticed by the whole town. And they were also noticed by a godly relative who could protect and provide for her.

What actions can you take in your situation? And more importantly, have you taken your burden to God? What attitude should you have toward God, and what attitude would He want you to have toward your situation?

### ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

Boaz and Ruth were a couple with character, and their example gives some strong and sobering messages for husbands and wives to consider. As you look back over this lesson and the “Putting It All Together” summary above, how is God prompting your heart today...

...as a husband?

...as a wife?

...as a couple?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

Father, Your Word says I am to do my work as if I am serving You. My prayer is that every task I undertake be dedicated to You and done with diligence, excellence, and joy.

## **Day 4: Building a Marriage that Lasts**

### ***Lessons for Wives from Ruth***

In a few sentences, jot down what you can take away from each of the following lessons from your study of Ruth:

1. In-laws are family—

2. Having a mentor is a blessing—
3. Develop faithfulness even in the little things—
4. Godly character is a magnet—
5. Accept the help of others—

From your study of Boaz and Ruth, “A Couple with Character,” what is the Number One message God is sending to your heart that will help you as a wife to build a better marriage? Write it here, and don’t forget to share it with your husband.

### ***A Prayer for Your Husband***

Dear Lord, give my husband joy in his work today as he lives out godly character in the workplace. Bless him with physical and mental strength for the challenge of each new day in his service to You.

### ***Lessons for Husbands from Boaz***

In a few words, jot down what you can take away from each of the following lessons from your study of Boaz:

1. Diligence—
2. Mercy—
3. Godliness—
4. Encourager—
5. Faithful—

From your study of Boaz, “A Couple with Character,” what is the Number One message God is sending to your heart that



will help you as a husband to build a better marriage? Write it here, and don't forget to share it with your wife.

### ***A Prayer for Your Wife***

Dear Lord, thank You for giving my wife examples of godly character in Ruth and Naomi. Encourage her with each new day to strive to be Your woman of excellence.

## **Day 5: Wrapping Up Your Week**

### ***Something to Think About...***

God saw Boaz and Ruth through some difficult times and situations. How do you think their character was challenged along the way, and how do you think their problems strengthened their character? What trying situation are you facing this week that demands your trust and perseverance?

### ***Something to Talk About...***

What did you like about each of the players in the book of Ruth—Naomi, Boaz, and Ruth? What qualities can you imitate from each of them?

### ***Something to Do...***

On separate 3" x 5" cards, write out one or two character qualities you want to work on this week.

- Swap cards for a week.
- Carry your spouse's card with you all week and pray daily over the contents of the card.
- In a week, get an update.

# 7

## David and Bathsheba

### **Second-chance Marriage**



#### **Day 1: Let's Talk!**

1. Read this story together and answer the questions addressed to you as a wife or husband.

Life was good...at least for a while. Michael wasn't sure how it happened, but he and Chloe had pushed their finances to the limit. Never in their marriage had their money picture looked so bad. Then came a downturn in the economy, and Michael lost his job due to mandatory layoffs by his company. So reluctantly, Chloe, who had been a paralegal before she and Michael married, went back to work at a law firm in town. Later, Michael's parents heard about a job opening in their city—an opening that fit his skills well. Following up on the lead, Michael interviewed for the position and got the job. This called for the entire family to give thanks to God on high!

Though Michael and Chloe were relieved Michael could work again, they didn't want to move to a different location. They agreed he should take the job and move back in with his parents until the job market got better in their hometown. In the meantime, Chloe would stay with her job because the pay was good and she received excellent benefits.

With Michael gone, Chloe couldn't help feeling lonely. Oh, they texted and phoned and emailed each other frequently. But the weeks went by all too slowly. To mask the huge void in her life, Chloe threw herself into her work. In fact, she volunteered for extra work and hours, staying late at the office many evenings.

Needless to say, Chloe's boss was thrilled as he saw his stack of unfinished work slowly diminish. He couldn't help but be impressed with Chloe. In his opinion, she was the best thing that had happened in his office in the last few years. With each passing day, he became more enamored with Chloe. Soon he began treating her to lunch, and as time went by, they learned more about each other and became friends.

One evening after a late work session in the office, Chloe's boss walked her out to her car. When she turned the key in the ignition, the engine wouldn't start. No problem! He brought his car around and, with the help of jumper cables, got her car started. As Chloe got ready to leave, she paused to give her boss a quick thank-you hug and a peck on his cheek. But her employer saw this as an opportunity and turned her casual response into something far more serious—a for-real kiss.

2. Think about the choices Michael and Chloe have made:

As a man and a husband, what are your thoughts about this story? How would you have handled this differently?

As a woman and a wife, what are your thoughts about this story? How would you have handled this differently?

3. In your book *A Couple After God's Own Heart*, read the opening story and answer these questions:

What was David doing—and what was he not doing?

What was Bathsheba doing—and what was she not doing?

Think about Michael and Chloe in their scenario. What similarities do you see between Michael and Chloe's scenario and David and Bathsheba's story?

### ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

Just for today, what will you do as a husband to stay pure and guard against compromising situations with other women?

Just for today, what will you do as a wife to stay pure and guard against compromising situations with other men?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

Lord, this is a serious area in everyday life! I purpose to refresh my love for my spouse daily and to steer clear of compromising situations.

## **Day 2: Together in God's Word**

With your Bible in hand, begin working through the "What's Going On?" section in your book. Look up each Bible passage, then read or review the comments and explanations.

1. *David Evaded His Responsibilities:* Read 2 Samuel 11:1 in your Bible. What is the first clue that David was not where he was supposed to be, and not doing what he was supposed to do?

2. *David Lingered in Temptation:* Read 2 Samuel 11:2-4. Describe the pathway to David's sin and the progression that led to his sin.

Look again at Eve's pathway into sin in Genesis 3:6. What similarities do you discover in David's fall?

Look at 1 John 2:16. How is the pathway into sin described here? What similarities do you discover in David's fall?

3. *David's Advances:* Read 2 Samuel 11:2 and 4 again. As you meet Bathsheba, what do you learn about her?

When a similar opportunity to sin was presented to Joseph in Genesis 39:7-9, how did he handle it?

4. *David's Deadly Solution:* Read 2 Samuel 11:5-21. What consequence of David's union with Bathsheba presented a problem to David (verse 5)?

What was David's first solution to his problem with Bathsheba (verses 6-13)?

What deadly solution did David come up with to rid himself of his problem (verses 14-21)?

### ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

Today's lesson includes four key messages:

Staying on schedule/task is a good thing.

Temptation left unchecked leads to sin.

One sin can easily lead to more sins.

Modesty tempts no one.

What difference does reading this information make in your life today...

...as a man and a husband?

...as a woman and a wife?

...as a couple?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

“Our Father who is in heaven...Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (excerpt of the Lord’s Prayer, Matthew 6:9,13 NASB).

### **Day 3: Together in God’s Word**

With your Bible in hand, continue working through the “What’s Going On?” section in your book. Look up each Bible passage, then read or review the comments and explanations.

5. *David’s Sin Exposed*: Read 2 Samuel 12:1-23. God sent the prophet Nathan to confront David with his sin. Which sin(s) did Nathan specifically point to in verse 9?

What punishment did God say He would place upon David in...

...verse 10?

...verse 11?

...verse 14?

What immediate effect did God’s message through Nathan have on David (verses 16-23)?

6. *David’s Confession*: Read 2 Samuel 12:13. How did David respond to Nathan with regard to his sin?

7. *David's Forgiveness:* Read 2 Samuel 12:13 again. What good news of God's grace did Nathan share?

According to Psalm 103:12, how fully does God forgive our sins?

### ***Putting It All Together***

David's faith and trust in God brought him to the pinnacle of success. He was the most powerful man in the region, yet lethargy took hold of him. Rather than go out to fight one more battle, he decided to stay in Jerusalem. As he walked on the roof of his palace, he saw Bathsheba bathing below on another rooftop. David then sent for her, committed adultery with her, and tried to hide his sin by murdering Bathsheba's husband, who was one of David's top lieutenants (see 2 Samuel 23:39).

David then married Bathsheba, who was pregnant with their child. One year later, he finally repented. God forgave David, but his moral failure had a devastating effect on his family, starting with the death of his child with Bathsheba. Still, God gave this couple a second chance. Later God chose Solomon, a son of David and Bathsheba, to be David's successor as king. This reminds us that God's grace is poured out upon all who fail and, in repentance, call upon the name of the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

In the account about David and Bathsheba, there are some strong and sobering messages for husbands and wives. As you look back over this lesson and the "Putting It All Together" summary above, what is God speaking to your heart today...

...as a husband?

...as a wife?

...as a couple?

God can bring hope from despair, order from chaos, beauty from ashes.<sup>2</sup>

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

God of all grace and mercy, I realize what happened to this couple could happen in any marriage—including mine. Your Word says I must diligently guard my heart (Proverbs 4:23). It is my resolve to keep a stricter watch over my thoughts, eyes, and heart.

## **Day 4: Building a Marriage that Lasts**

### ***Lessons for Wives from Bathsheba***

In a few sentences, jot down what you can take away from each of the following lessons from your study of Bathsheba:

1. Learn to live with a leader—
2. Keep your eyes fixed forward—
3. Keep the lines of communication open—
4. Make modesty a must—

From your study of David and Bathsheba, “Second-chance Marriage,” what is the Number One message God is sending to your heart that will help you as a wife to build a better marriage? Write it here, and don’t forget to share it with your husband.

### ***A Prayer for Your Husband***



Dear Lord, I want to pray for my husband as he steps into the world today—for his purity, for his strength to resist temptation, and for a closer walk with You. Keep him in the center of Your will.

### ***Lessons for Husbands from David***

In a few words, jot down what you can take away from each of the following lessons from your study of David:

1. Realize obedience is the key to life—and marriage—
2. Gaze only on your wife—
3. Check your armor for cracks—
4. Confess your sin quickly—
5. Be a husband after God’s own heart—

From your study of David and Bathsheba, “Second-chance Marriage,” what is the Number One message God is sending to your heart that will help you as a husband to build a better marriage? Write it here, and don’t forget to share it with your wife.

### ***A Prayer for Your Wife***

Dear Lord, keep my wife and me close to one another. Encourage her as she helps me remain pure from sexual sin. I pray that she will stay near to You, remembering that You are always there and Your grace is always sufficient.

## **Day 5: Wrapping Up Your Week**

### ***Something to Think About...***

As you invite God to examine your heart and your relationship with your spouse, are there any sinful thoughts

or attitudes you need to deal with and change?

***Something to Talk About...***

As a couple after God's own heart, how can you help each other avoid temptations relating to the opposite sex?

***Something to Do...***

On separate 3" x 5" cards, write out a commitment you would like to make to each other.

- Swap cards for a week.
- Carry your spouse's card with you all week and pray daily over the contents of the card.
- In a week, get an update.

# 8

## Zacharias and Elizabeth

### Partners with Pure Hearts



#### **Day 1: Let's Talk!**

1. Read this story together and answer the questions addressed to you as a wife or husband.

Daniel and Betty Sue had been “church hopping” for several months. They loved the Lord and were so thankful they were a Christian couple. Because they had both grown up in Christian homes, they had each known that’s what they wanted in a marriage and family—that God would be first. Yet try as they had, something just wasn’t quite right at the church they had been going to. Dissatisfied with the direction their church was heading, they talked and prayed, and they believed God was leading them to search for a new church. In God’s timing they arrived at First Community Church, and immediately they felt good about everything they saw and heard. The pastor was a solid Bible teacher, and they were quickly welcomed and absorbed into the life of the church. In no time, they felt right at home.

This fresh, lively church experience went on for some time. But then big changes took place. For starters, they gave birth to their first child. What joy! And what a thrill it was to take part in a baby dedication service for their precious one. However, with baby’s—and baby’s parents’!—runny noses, sleepless nights, and changing routines, Daniel

and Betty Sue didn't always make it to church. What's more, Betty Sue was afraid their little one might catch something from one of the other babies in the nursery. After all the colds and earaches and fevers and doctor visits they'd been through over a period of months, they sure didn't want to bring home any new germs!

And of course there was the ordeal of getting everyone ready for church and arriving on time. Eventually their church attendance became more sporadic. Then Daniel got a promotion at work, for which both he and Betty Sue were ecstatic. It was a terrific career advancement that came loaded with more money, stock options, a generous expense account, a company car—all the corporate trimmings.

But the job had its downside: It was very demanding. Daniel had to go through some intensive training courses, and he also had to do a lot of travel. And when he wasn't on the road, he had to spend extra time at the office catching up with his workload.

With so many of their weeks spent apart, Daniel and Betty Sue decided their weekends needed to be more about them and their "precious." So they opted to try to attend the midweek couples' Bible study...that is, if they could get a babysitter. So very subtly, their church attendance and involvement in ministry was sliding down their priority scale. But every time they felt a twinge of guilt, they reasoned that God would want them to work on their marriage and family first. And, hey, what better way to do that than to take a fun family camping trip this next weekend!

2. Think about the choices Daniel and Betty Sue were making.

As a man and a husband, what are your thoughts about this story? How would you handle a situation like this?

As a woman and a wife, what are your thoughts about this story? How would you handle a situation like this?

3. In your book *A Couple After God's Own Heart*, read the opening story and answer these questions:

Who was Zacharias, and why was he away from home?

Who was Elizabeth, and how was she dealing with her barrenness?

What differences do you see in Daniel and Betty Sue's priorities and Zacharias and Elizabeth's priorities?

### ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

Just for today, what will you do as a husband to ensure that you are leading your family toward God—toward being a family after God's own heart?

Just for today, what will you do as a wife to ensure that you are moving your family toward God—toward being a family after God's own heart?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

Jesus, Your Word encourages me to seek Your kingdom as a priority for my life and my marriage. Help me and my life mate to stay focused on what really matters—You, Your Word, and Your kingdom work.

## **Day 2: Together in God's Word**

With your Bible in hand, begin working through the "What's Going On?" section in your book. Look up each Bible passage, then read or review the comments and explanations.

1. *An Uncommon Couple:* Read Luke 1:5-7. What were Zacharias's credentials?

What were Elizabeth's credentials?

How did God describe this couple?

What information did God give us about this couple's personal lives?

2. *A Unique Opportunity:* Read Luke 1:8-10. Where did this scene take place?

What was the special occasion?

Why was Zacharias present, and what was he doing?

3. *An Unusual Visitor:* Read Luke 1:11-17. What miracle occurred during the offering of the incense?

What was the role of prayer...

...in this worship occasion?

...in Zacharias's heart as he performed his duties?

What was the angel's message to Zacharias?

List the specific details the angel gave about this child:

4. *An Unbelieving Reaction:* Read Luke 1:18-22. Write out Zacharias's response to the angel's wonderful news.

In response, how did the angel describe himself and his mission?

What was the result of Zacharias's unbelieving reaction?

By the time Zacharias exited the temple, what miracles had occurred?

### ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

Today's lesson includes these key messages to you about God's involvement in your marriage:

God is looking for couples who have the right focus—a Godward focus.

God is interested in how a couple responds spiritually when they don't have everything they want.

God is the God of the impossible and expects His people to believe Him when He speaks.

What difference does this information make in your life today...

...as a husband?

...as a wife?

...as a couple?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

Dear God, thank You for Your plan for my life and marriage. Give me greater faith to accept and submit to Your plan. May my trust in You grow stronger with each passing day.

### **Day 3: Together in God's Word**

With your Bible in hand, continue working through the "What's Going On?" section in your book. Look up each Bible passage, then read or review the comments and explanations.

5. *An Uplifting Response:* Read Luke 1:23-25. What was Elizabeth's focus with her new situation?

6. *An Unexpected Blessing:* Read Luke 1:39-45. Briefly describe the meeting between Elizabeth and Mary.

How was Elizabeth's relationship with Mary described in Luke 1:36?

7. *An Unrehearsed Speech:* Read Luke 1:67-79. Then scan Luke 1:57-66 and briefly describe the events surrounding the exciting birth of John the Baptist.

Bonus question for every couple after God's own heart: Read Luke 1:42 and 67. What experience did both Zacharias and Elizabeth, husband and wife, have in common?

### ***Putting It All Together***

Zacharias and Elizabeth fulfill our definition of a couple after God's own heart to the letter. A couple is a unit—not two singles. A couple after God's own heart joins together to do all God's will. They purpose to both be blameless. They purpose to both look at life through God's eyes. They purpose to both view their tragedies and their triumphs as having God's stamp of involvement. If a couple is looking for one couple in the Bible to model their married lives after, Zacharias and Elizabeth should be an obvious choice. This couple got it. They did it right. May you and your honey go and do likewise!

### ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

In the account about Zacharias and Elizabeth, there are some strong and sobering messages for husbands and wives. As you look back over this lesson and the "Putting It



All Together” summary above, what is God speaking to your heart today...

...as a husband?

...as a wife?

...as a couple?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

“A couple after God’s own heart.” God, I like the sound of this! And more than that, I desire it. As I examine my part in my marriage and talk to my spouse about how we can join together to live as this awesome couple, lead us in the way we should go.

## **Day 4: Building a Marriage that Lasts**

### ***Lessons for Wives from Elizabeth***

In a few sentences, jot down what you can take away from each of the following lessons from your study of Elizabeth:

1. Your dreams don’t always come true—
2. You can rise above bad circumstances—
3. It’s always possible to grow spiritually—
4. Take care of first things first—

From your study of Zacharias and Elizabeth, “Partners with Pure Hearts,” what is the Number One message God is sending to your heart that will help you as a wife to build a better marriage? Write it here, and don’t forget to share it with your husband.

## ***A Prayer for Your Husband***

Father, this is such an important lesson! I pray for my husband to be accepting of anything lacking in our marriage—anything that we are not in control of. May he, like Zacharias, take our cause to You in prayer. Fill him with a strong faith that boldly asks of You and fully trusts Your answers.

## ***Lessons for Husbands from Zacharias***

In a few words, jot down what you can take away from each of the following lessons from your study of Zacharias:

1. It's all about your heart—
2. Marriage is for better or worse—
3. Commit to praying for your wife—
4. Be faithful in all things, large and small—

From your study of Zacharias and Elizabeth, “Partners with Pure Hearts,” what is the Number One message God is sending to your heart that will help you as a husband to build a better marriage? Write it here, and don't forget to share it with your wife.

## ***A Prayer for Your Wife***

Father, I agree—this is an important lesson! I pray for my wife to be accepting of anything lacking in our marriage—anything that we are not in control of. Keep us from blaming each other. May she, like Elizabeth, trust You daily and follow You with her whole heart, no matter what.

## **Day 5: Wrapping Up Your Week**

### ***Something to Think About...***

Life can easily lead you off God's track as a man, a woman, or a couple. And what makes each day more difficult is that at first, many of life's decisions *seem* to be taking you in the right direction. But as time goes on, you may begin to see signs that make you wonder: *Is my decision the right one? Is it leading me in a godly direction?* As you think about living as a couple after God's own heart, are there any signs you've noticed that may indicate you are moving away from God's will in specific areas of your life?

### ***Something to Talk About...***

Zacharias and Elizabeth had one very large problem for most of their married life. Do you? What is it, and how are you handling it...

...as a husband?

...as a wife?

...as a couple?

### ***Something to Do...***

On separate 3" x 5" cards, write out an area in which you need to work on your relationship with God.

- Swap cards for a week.
- Carry your spouse's card with you all week and pray daily over the contents of the card.
- In a week, get an update.

# 9

## Joseph and Mary

### **A Couple in Crisis**



#### **Day 1: Let's Talk!**

1. Read this story together and answer the questions addressed to you as a wife or husband.

The highway sign at the crossroad lay in the ditch. There was no way a traveler could spot it. Parked at the unmarked junction and considering their options, Jon and Grace scanned the horizon. There was a solid bank of dark storm clouds in the distance, and the fading sunlight was evidence that night was fast approaching. In despair, they realized with certainty that they were lost. And worse than that, they knew they could even be facing a life-and-death crisis.

“How did this happen?” they asked each other out loud. Here they were, taking a rare cross-country vacation—rare because both Jon and Grace held down stressful, high-responsibility jobs and for at least a year they had been unable to nail down a time off that met with both their employers’ approval. And, thank the Lord, it had finally happened! They had looked forward to this time away together for nine months now. Every day they had talked about it, dreamed about what they would see and do, and planned each day’s adventures.

Today had been tagged as “Grace’s Day.” Ever since she was a little girl, she had wanted to see the famous

landscape of alien-looking spires and buttes that stood tall over Monument Valley, which for the most part straddled the Arizona-Utah border in America. Even though she was only 27 years old now, you could say that Monument Valley had been on Grace's "bucket list" ever since her dad had showed her pictures of that scenic wonderland from one of his *National Geographic* magazines.

Jon had done his research. He knew exactly how to get to this lone, remote valley. He had all the information—get off Interstate 40, go up to US 89, then to US 160, then on to US Route 163, which cut through the heart of Monument Valley National Park. No problem there. As Jon planned the journey, he hadn't been sure about Grace's dream of making this desert trek. But wow, he was glad they had done it. The panoramic splendor of Monument Valley had made for a truly breathtaking adventure that they both appreciated.

But Grace's lifetime dream had begun to turn into a nightmare when an official-looking helicopter approached from the distance and hovered overhead, barking out instructions that all park guests were to leave because of imminent flash floods caused by the approaching thunderstorms. They were advised to depart from the valley as quickly as possible. Jon and Grace shared a laugh when the person in the helicopter said, "All park guests" because, as far as they could tell, they were the only visitors in sight. Reluctantly—but immediately—they headed on out of the valley. But somehow they had missed the one road sign that would point them to the right way out.

Now, as they sat in their car at the flat, unmarked crossroad—with an approaching thunderstorm and nightfall descending upon them, they had to make a fast and serious decision. Jon, who had always prided himself on his directional skills with no need for a map, thought they should turn north. But Grace, who had always been an excellent navigator and had paid careful attention to the map in her lap, believed they needed to go further on the

present road to reach US Route 163 and the way out—the way to higher ground.

2. Think about the pressing decision Jon and Grace need to make.

As a man and a husband, what are your thoughts about this story? How would you handle a situation like this?

As a woman and a wife, what are your thoughts about this story? How would you respond to a situation like this?

3. In your book *A Couple After God's Own Heart*, read the opening story. With Jon and Grace's scenario in mind, what similarities do you see between their crisis and that faced by Joseph and Mary?

### ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

Just for today, what will you do as a husband (and a leader) to communicate with your wife, especially with regard to any current crises you are facing?

Just for today, what will you do as a wife to demonstrate your trust in your husband's leadership, or his attempts to lead?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

Father, my first obligation is to trust in Your wisdom when a crisis comes. You have given us two minds and one heart—and Yourself—to handle any situation. Help us to never forget that two are better than one.

## **Day 2: Together in God's Word**

With your Bible in hand, begin working through the “What’s Going On?” section in your book. Look up each Bible passage, then read or review the comments and explanations.

1. *The Angelic Announcement:* Read Luke 1:26-38 in your Bible. Write out in a few words what’s happening, then answer the other questions as well:

What’s happening?

When? Who was sent, and by whom?

Where? To whom?

How was this girl described? What greeting was given by the visitor?

The angel said she would have a son. How did he describe the child (verses 31-33)?

Jot down the angel’s answer to Mary’s question, “How can this be?” (verses 34 and 37).

2. *Affirmation from Elizabeth:* Scan through Luke 1:36-56. First the angel spoke of another unusual pregnancy. Who was he referring to, and what made this pregnancy so unusual?

What happened when Mary entered Elizabeth’s house (verse 41)?

What words did Elizabeth use to affirm Mary’s pregnancy?

Scan through Mary’s outpouring of praise in verses 46-49. How did Mary describe her relationship with God?

Lists several facts about God that were mentioned by Mary in verses 50-55.

3. *Crisis #1, Dream #1*: Read Matthew 1:18-25. What was Joseph's Crisis #1, and how did he respond (verses 18-19)?

Note: The reference to "put her away" means to give Mary a bill of divorcement. According to Old Testament customs, Joseph and Mary's betrothal, or engagement, was considered the same as marriage.

What happened to cause Joseph to not follow through with the thought of divorcing Mary (verses 20-21)?

How quickly and decisively did Joseph respond?

What additional information do you learn about Joseph in verse 25?

4. *Crisis #2, Dream #2*: Read Matthew 2:13-15. What was Crisis #2?

How quickly and decisively did Joseph respond?

### ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

Today's lesson includes key messages to you about:

Godliness is the gateway to usefulness.

Obedience to God's Word is the path to usefulness.

Trust in God enables a wife to follow her husband.

Leadership for a husband begins with following God.

A family needs godly leadership in order to follow God.



What difference does reading this information make in your life today...

...as a husband?

...as a wife?

...as a couple?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

O Lord God, we are again reminded of how You are looking for godly couples to serve You. May I be a marriage partner who pursues godliness so that I can join my partner in becoming a couple after Your heart.

5. *Crisis #3, Dream #3*: Read Matthew 2:19-21. What is Crisis #3?

How quickly and decisively did Joseph respond?

6. *Crisis #4, Dream #4*: Read Matthew 2:22-23. What was Crisis #4?

How quickly and decisively did Joseph respond?

### ***Putting It All Together***

As you piece together the story of Joseph and Mary from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, you quickly realize the significant role Joseph played in the birth and protection of Jesus through a number of serious crises. With the help of God through dreams, Joseph provided strong leadership for Mary and the baby Jesus time and time again. He was a major force for good because he was a man who wanted to do things God's way—a man, a husband, and a father after God's own heart. Initially Joseph wanted to help Mary after finding out about her pregnancy. However, when God clarified to Joseph the reason for Mary's condition, without

any hesitation Joseph took Mary as his wife. He then continued to demonstrate his faith in God as he moved his family around as directed by his dreams. Mary had done her part: She had been obedient as the “maidservant of the Lord.” Then she allowed her husband to do his part—to lead her and the Son of God through crisis after crisis.

### ***Growing as a Couple After God’s Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

As you look back over this lesson and the “Putting It All Together” summary above, what is God’s message to your heart today...

...as a husband?

...as a wife?

...as a couple?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

Dear God, Your message continues to be loud and clear, that reading Your Word and allowing Your Holy Spirit to speak to me is essential for living my role in my marriage. Help the two of us to serve You as a unit, to follow You together.

## **Day 4: Building a Marriage that Lasts**

### ***Lessons for Wives from Mary***

In a few sentences, jot down what you can take away from each of the following lessons from your study of Mary:

1. Respond positively to the will of God—
2. Hide God’s Word in your heart—

3. Trust God to guide you through your husband—
4. Your humility is precious to God—

From your study of Joseph and Mary, “A Couple in Crisis,” what is the Number One message God is sending to your heart that will help you as a wife to build a better marriage? Write it here, and don’t forget to share it with your husband.

### ***A Prayer for Your Husband***

Dear Lord, I pray that my husband will always be growing in his faith and his trust in You. When a crisis comes into our marriage, enable him to desire Your will, seek Your wisdom, and respond in a godly way—that he would be a leader after Your own heart.

### ***Lessons for Husbands from Joseph***

In a few words, jot down what you can take away from each of the following lessons from your study of Joseph:

1. “Godliness is great gain”—
2. Listen and learn—
3. Obedience is the key to usefulness—
4. Leadership is essential for a husband—
5. Selflessness is fundamental to being a godly husband  
—

From your study of Joseph and Mary, “A Couple in Crisis,” what is the Number One message God is sending to your heart that will help you as a husband to build a better marriage? Write it here, and don’t forget to share it with your wife.

## ***A Prayer for Your Wife***

Lord of our marriage, I pray that my wife will always be growing in her faith and her trust in You. When a crisis comes into our marriage, enable her to accept Your will, share her wisdom, and support me fully as we work together to respond to Your leading.

## **Day 5: Wrapping Up Your Week**

### ***Something to Think About...***

You've had a lot to think about over the last several weeks as the two of you journeyed together through *A Couple After God's Own Heart*. This week's study of Joseph and Mary's crises illustrates the ups and downs that can take place in married life. Realizing the certainty of crises, think now about how you are going to deal with the next crisis that is lurking around the corner. How can the two of you work together as a team as Joseph and Mary did, and what changes or improvements do you each need to make?

### ***Something to Talk About...***

What crisis are you presently facing, and how are you dealing with it as a couple? What grade would you give yourselves as a couple? Are you a part of the problem, or are you doing your best to be part of the solution? What do you need to do...

...as a couple?

...as a husband?

...as a wife?

### ***Something to Do...***

On separate 3" x 5" cards, write out the biggest crisis you are facing either individually or as a couple.

- Swap cards for a week.
- Carry your spouse's card with you all week and pray daily over the contents of the card.
- In a week, get an update.

## Aquila and Priscilla

### **A Remarkable Husband-wife Team**



#### **Day 1: Let's Talk!**

1. Read this story together and answer the questions addressed to you as a husband or wife.

David is a Master Chief in the Navy, and he is highly trained and very good at his specialized job. His job description is classified, which means his wife, Barb, will never know exactly what his work entails. She has her suspicions, and she's heard her share of rumors on the military base. Deep in her heart she's guessed how dangerous David's "secret" missions are, but she also knows not to ask. She loves her Navy man to pieces, is committed to supporting him in his work, knows how to fill her time while he's deployed on missions, screams louder than any of the other wives when he returns home to her, and prays—a lot!—for him.

Even with his high-risk job and all his absences, Barb loves the opportunities that come with David's work. They get to travel to exciting and unusual countries, cities, and cultures, and they especially enjoy meeting new people. Their moves from place to place have been relatively easy because, so far, they haven't had any children. In their hearts they trust that God has His plan and reasons for withholding little ones from them at this time. While they

hope and pray to one day have a rollicking household of kids, they are making the most of their freedom by using their home for their couples' Bible study group from church and, of course, as a hangout for Navy singles.

Barb also loves to cook—"The more the merrier!" is her motto. And the big, burly young sailors love to come over to "Dave and Barb's." They relish kicking back, eating barbecued steaks and burgers—and especially Barb's homemade pie—playing pool, teaming up for video game playoffs, and watching time-delayed sports events on television.

And it never fails: Because everyone knows David and Barb go to church "religiously," eventually talk gets around to church, the Bible, and Jesus. Both David and Barb had determined long ago that the Navy might pay the bills, but their real job—the passion of their hearts—was sharing Christ and the strength and peace and confidence Jesus brings to their lives. The military definitely provides them with an abundance of seeking hearts as prime candidates for the gospel and the love of Jesus. There is just one problem: Occasionally one of David's superiors gives him a less-than-satisfactory job rating because of his strong faith.

2. Think about the choices David and Barb have made:

As a man and a husband, what are your thoughts about this story? How would you have handled this differently, or what can you implement in your own life?

As a woman and a wife, what are your thoughts about this story? How could you use your home more for outreach?

3. In your book *A Couple After God's Own Heart*, read the opening story. How was David and Barb's scenario similar to that of Aquila and Priscilla?

## ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

Just for today, what will you do as a husband to encourage your wife to partner with you in outreach?

Just for today, what will you do as a wife to encourage your husband to partner with you in outreach?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

Lord Jesus, You encourage Your people to be like lights on a hill, to be ambassadors for the gospel and messengers of hope. May we as a couple accept this challenge and open our hearts and our home so others may see You and Your work in our lives and marriage.

## **Day 2: Together in God's Word**

With your Bible in hand, begin working through the "What's Going On?" section in your book. Look up each Bible passage, then read or review the comments and explanations.

1. *Starting a Church in Corinth:* Read Acts 18:1-4 in your Bible. What was the common ground that God used to bring Paul together with this couple?

How do you, as a husband, view your job as "common ground" for sharing the gospel?

As a wife, how do you view your home and workplace as "common ground" for sharing the gospel?

2. *Moving to Ephesus:* Read Acts 18:18-19. What do these verses tell you about Aquila and Priscilla's value to Paul in his missionary work?



Describe your involvement in ministry. And while you're at it, go ahead and describe your dream ministry.

If you had to leave your present ministry, what effect would it have on yourself and others?

3. *Looking at Teamwork:* Read Acts 18:24-28. Describe how Aquila and Priscilla worked as a team to educate Apollos and send him on his way to minister to others.

4. *Mentoring a Minister:* Read Acts 18:24-28. Where did Apollos fall short in his understanding and preaching?

What did Aquila and Priscilla do to make it possible to talk with Apollos?

What further assistance did this remarkable husband-wife team give Apollos?

### ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

Today's lesson includes four key messages:

Setbacks in a marriage should be seen as opportunities and springboards for a better marriage.

Marriage is a team effort, and so is a team ministry.

Confrontation should be done with love and discernment.

No one has all the answers—even Apollos needed input.

What difference do these principles make in your life today...

...as a husband?

...as a wife?

...as a couple?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

Help me, Lord, to do my part in my marriage so my team-partner and I can be effective instruments for Your service. I know I think I'm too busy or too unqualified to do kingdom work. But I also know, by the miracle of Your grace, I can do it. As I said before, help me, Lord...please.

### **Day 3: Together in God's Word**

With your Bible in hand, continue working through the "What's Going On?" section in your book. Look up each Bible passage, then read or review the comments and explanations.

5. *Using Their Home as a Church in Ephesus:* Scan through Acts 19. As you read along, imagine Aquila and Priscilla right there in the middle of what was happening in Ephesus. Note the progression of the early church meeting sites. Where did these meetings start, and for how long (verse 8)?

What happened to cause the meeting site to change, and where was the new site (verse 9)?

How long did the Christians meet at this site, and what was the result (verse 10)?

Read this section in your book again. Then read 1 Corinthians 16:19. Where is the church now meeting?

Aquila and Priscilla were a lay couple who quietly went about the business of serving Paul and the church. How does their faithful, humble, behind-the-scenes ministry in Acts 19 encourage you as a couple in your ministry?

6. *Using Their Home as a Church in Rome:* In time, Aquila and Priscilla moved back to Rome. According to Romans 16:3-5, how do you see Aquila and Priscilla using their home once they returned to Rome?

Paul then left Ephesus and went back to Corinth. Where did Aquila and Priscilla go, according to Romans 16:3-4?

When Paul wrote his letter to the Christians in Rome (the book of Romans), how did he describe...

...Aquila and Priscilla?

...their ministry to him personally?

...the breadth of their ministry?

...their present involvement in ministry?

7. *Serving Where Needed:* Let's fast-forward 16 or 17 years in the formation of the early church. Read 2 Timothy 4:19. When Paul wrote to Timothy, whom did he greet, and what does that indicate about their faithfulness?

### ***Putting It All Together***

Aquila and Priscilla were a remarkable husband-and-wife team. In Scripture, they are always mentioned together. Together, they made tents. Together, they befriended the apostle Paul, who was also a tentmaker. Together, they opened their home to him. And together, they accompanied him on his missionary journeys. Together, their home was always open to others and for church services, no matter where they lived. Together, they were learners who willingly and hungrily sat under Paul's teaching. Together, they passed on what Paul taught them by teaching and talking to others.

Even when it came to danger and courage, Aquila and Priscilla were mentioned together: Together, they risked their lives for Paul. Paul was so deeply grateful for their friendship and partnership in the gospel that, in his letter to the church in Rome, he openly expressed his appreciation for their service. And the last time this couple after God's own heart is mentioned in the Bible, they are mentioned... together.

### ***Growing as a Couple After God's Own Heart...One Day at a Time***

Aquila and Priscilla's example as a married couple offers some strong and encouraging messages to you as a husband and wife. Look back over this lesson and the "Putting It All Together" summary above. How is God prompting your heart today...

...as a husband?

...as a wife?

...as a couple?

### ***A Prayer to Pray***

My soul is moved, Father, as I lay myself and my marriage before You. My heart's desire is to be a faithful servant to You and Your people, and a faithful partner to my spouse—hopefully as we, together, become a force for You in our church and community.

## **Day 4: Building a Marriage that Lasts**

### ***Lessons for Wives from Aquila and Priscilla***

In a few sentences, jot down what you can take away from each of the following lessons from your study of Priscilla:

1. Work as a team.
2. Grow together in the faith.
3. Open your home to others.

From your study of Aquila and Priscilla, “A Remarkable Husband-wife Team,” what is the Number One message God is sending to your heart that will help you as a wife to build a better marriage? Write it here, and don’t forget to share it with your husband.

### ***A Prayer for Your Husband***

Dear Lord, what a blessing it has been to spend these past several weeks studying the couples of the Bible with my husband. I pray that he will want to continue pursuing this biblical journey and, as a result, we will grow closer to You and each other in our quest to become a couple after God’s own heart.

### ***Lessons for Husbands from Aquila and Priscilla***

In a few words, jot down what you can take away from each of the following lessons from your study of Aquila:

1. Work as a team.
2. Grow together in the faith.
3. Open your home to others.

From your study of Aquila and Priscilla, “A Remarkable Husband-wife Team,” what is the Number One message God is sending to your heart that will help you as a husband to build a better marriage? Write it here, and don’t forget to share it with your wife.

### ***A Prayer for Your Wife***

Dear Lord, I thank You for these past several weeks studying the couples of the Bible with my wife. I pray that she will want to continue pursuing this biblical journey and, as a result, that we will grow closer to You and each other in our quest to become a couple after God's own heart.

## **Day 5: Wrapping Up Your Week**

### ***Something to Think About...***

Most of the people you meet every day know little about Jesus and the Bible. In fact, for some people, you may be the only "Bible" they will ever read (2 Corinthians 3:2-3). As they observe your words and actions, are they getting an accurate picture of Jesus and His message to them?

### ***Something to Talk About...***

What are some steps you can take to be more outgoing in sharing your faith...

...as a couple?

...as a man in the workplace and in your neighborhood?

...as a woman in the workplace and in your neighborhood?

### ***Something to Do...***

On separate 3" x 5" cards, write out the one thing that keeps you from reaching out to others.

- Swap cards for a week.
- Carry your spouse's card with you all week and pray daily over the contents of the card.
- In a week, get an update.

# Notes



## **1—Adam and Eve**

1. John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, NASB (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006), p. 20.
2. John C. Maxwell, exec. ed., *The Maxwell Leadership Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2002), p. 6.
3. Jim George, *The Bare Bones Bible Handbook* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2006), p. 12.

## **2—Abraham and Sarah**

1. William MacDonald, *Enjoying the Proverbs*, note on Proverbs 28:26 (Kansas City, KS: Walterick Publishers, 1982), p. 151.
2. Jim George, *The Bare Bones Bible Handbook* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2006), p. 12.

## **3—Isaac and Rebekah**

1. Michael Kendrick and Daryl Lucas, eds, *365 Life Lessons from Bible People* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1996), reading #24.

## **4—Jacob and Rachel**

1. Jim George, *A Husband After God's Own Heart* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2003), pp. 18-19.

## **7—David and Bathsheba**

1. Adapted from Jim George, *The Bare Bones Bible Handbook* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2006), p. 12.
2. Adapted from Michael Kendrick and Daryl Lucas, eds., *365 Life Lessons from Bible People* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1996), reading #137.

# About the Authors



Jim and Elizabeth George are bestselling authors, with a combined 8 million books in print, including *A Man After God's Own Heart* and *A Woman After God's Own Heart*.<sup>®</sup>

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