

*Dynamic Duos*  
By John Guzzetta

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By John Guzzetta

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*Spiritual “equipment” for the contest of life*



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## *Dedication*

For my dear wife Christine, who taught me the gospel and still does;  
and for our three wonderful children, Jonathan, Julianna, and Jessica.

## Chapter One



### *The Couple:*

### *The Basic Unit of Human Experience*

**T**he oldest institution in the world is not a company, not a bank, not a hotel, not a university, not a church denomination. It is not a nation, not a monarchy, not a dynasty. It is not a palace, not a pyramid, not an archaeological ruin.

The oldest institution in the world is marriage!

As long as there have been human beings, there has been marriage. As long as this earth remains, until the resurrection, there will be marriage.

Marriage is one of three institutions that God Himself ordained for the benefit of mankind. God ordained government (Romans 13:1). God ordained the church (Matthew 16:18). And God ordained marriage. The family, though smaller in size than governments and the church, precedes the others. God created the family in the very beginning, in the Garden of Eden.

The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.” ... So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man said, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed (Genesis 2:18–25, NASB).

From that point forward, throughout all history, in every corner of the planet, in every culture and in every social or economic circumstance, the couple—a husband and a wife—has been the basic unit of human experience. Kings and queens marry. Peasants marry. Americans marry and Russians marry; sometimes they marry each other. People in the worst circum-

stances, in Dust Bowls and Great Depressions and even in concentration camps, find ways to perform wedding vows, endeavoring to create a pocket of happiness in the midst of a difficult world. God has given mankind a powerful blessing built on a firm commitment.

Marriage is God's holy will, designed not to stifle man, not to prevent him from having fun during his few short years upon the earth, but exactly the opposite—to provide him the most wonderful, exciting, and uplifting relationship two people can know (Ecclesiastes 9:9). Someone has wisely pointed out that marriage is the one feature of the Garden of Eden not taken away from man after the fall; in a sense, God has designed marriage to be a little piece of paradise on earth.

### **Why This Book?**

In these thirteen lessons, I intend to present for your consideration several impressive couples of the Bible. It is my hope and prayer that this study will be beneficial to all. It is especially important that we learn God's will for our lives, as society drifts farther and faster from the biblical pattern.

If you are married, I hope that this study will give you a greater appreciation for the institution of marriage, a deeper understanding of what God intends to accomplish through your marriage. I hope that it will draw you closer to your spouse. This book will not discuss every single thing that could be said on creating a successful, joyful marriage. But by studying the biographies of couples God presents to us in Scripture, we will be prepared for much of what we will face.

If you are planning to be married, I hope that this study will give you the tools you need to become a good spouse, and to select a good spouse.

If you are not planning to marry at all, keep reading anyway. These couples are vital parts of the Bible story, and for that fact alone they are worth your time. Moreover, anyone can share these principles to other married couples or soon-to-be-married couples.

When I say "impressive" couples, I don't always mean positive. It would seem that for every good couple, like Priscilla and Aquila, there is a bad couple, like Ananias and Sapphira. For every Isaac and Rebekah, there is an Ahab and Jezebel. Yet, there is a saying that no one is worthless, for he can serve as a bad example. The inspired Scriptures present these couples—the good ones as well as the bad ones—to teach us something vital about the marriage relationship under the sovereignty of God. Their experiences "were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Corinthians 10:11).

I must first discuss four things.

## Homosexuality

First, a “couple” does not include two men or two women.

Great strides have been made by the homosexual agenda in the last decade or so, even in small Southern towns. Gay marriage is now the law of the land in all fifty states. Christians must keep watch on public policy discussions, questionable science, media programming, and educational efforts all the way down to the elementary school level. But for the sake of this brief section, there is only one necessary consideration: What does the Bible say about homosexuality?

God’s will toward homosexuality is clear. In Genesis 1:27 God created man “male and female,” and decreed in 2:21–25, “a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife.” God designed mankind to be sexually compatible; that males and females would be perfect counterparts in a family relationship (2:18) and naturally capable of reproduction. Human physiology on the physical and emotional level is a powerful witness to God’s intention.

The Law of Moses declares, “You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination” (Leviticus 18:22). God showed His willingness to judge those involved in this sin when He destroyed the ancient valley of Sodom with fire and brimstone (Genesis 18). God identifies homosexuality as sinful in the New Testament as well (1 Timothy 1:9–10), and labels it an activity that must be repented of, lest it keep a person out of Heaven (1 Corinthians 6:9–10).

Scientists and psychologists can debate the nature of brain structure and lust. I am convinced that God does not put a person in a situation where he must sin (James 1:13–15; 1 Corinthians 10:13) whether by circumstance or by birth. Homosexuality is certainly a powerful temptation for some, but it does not become a sin unless it is acted on. Many simply refuse to accept or obey God’s prohibitions, throwing them out along with the whole Bible. At least that is consistent. Worse, in my mind, are those who attempt to reconcile the Bible with homosexuality.

Do not be deceived. No matter what the government or society says about gay marriage, God’s word trumps it. A couple is properly defined as a man and a woman.

## Cohabitation

A “couple” in the context of this study does not include a man and woman living together without marriage. That arrangement has become very popular today. Statistics show that cohabitation is quickly gaining on the institution of marriage. In some ethnic groups, and in some countries, more

children are born into non-married households than married households. A recent *Time* magazine cover story questioned whether or not marriage still made sense, or provided any benefit to society. The author observed, “In purely practical terms, marriage is just not as necessary as it used to be ... neither men nor women need to be married to have sex or companionship or professional success or respect or even children” (Belinda Luscombe, “Who Needs Marriage?” 11/29/2010). More and more, tying the knot of marriage seems to be pointless, especially as science conquers disease and unplanned pregnancy, and the tax code and social safety net disincentivize marriage.

Once again, I will ignore the conflicting social studies that, depending on who commissions them, find benefits or detriments with marriage. In the Bible, one can clearly see God’s wisdom in making a firm commitment the foundation of couplehood rather than shallow emotional infatuation. The promise is a prerequisite to the living arrangement. Emotions are stronger and weaker all throughout a couple’s life, depending on the various stresses they encounter. They “like” each other more or less at any given moment. But a godly married couple will always love each other. During trying times, the commitment to one another in the sight of God is what glues them together as a couple and a family until the circumstances change, the stresses are resolved, and they find themselves passionately head-over-heels once again.

Scripture demands marriage for those who would live together or enjoy a sexual relationship. Hebrews 13:4 says, “Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” We have created euphemisms for it, but premarital sex is fornication, and it endangers one’s fellowship with God.

A sexual relationship within the committed bonds of marriage is righteous, and it is more fulfilling. Finding a different woman every week is the selfish man’s game; the real fun and challenge is providing for the same woman all her life!

## **Polygamy**

When a friend of mine heard the title of this book, he sarcastically asked, “Which of Solomon’s seven hundred wives or three hundred concubines will you include in your study of couples of the Bible?”

Point well taken! While God permitted polygamy in previous dispensations, Jesus points out that God’s real intention always has been one woman, one man, for life (Matthew 19:4–5). Monogamy is the only marital arrangement God authorizes in the Christian dispensation.

## Singlehood

Fourth, plugging oneself into a “couple” is not necessary to be blessed and to carry out a fulfilling life. Singlehood is a perfectly acceptable condition. While marriage is likely to be the experience for most people, there are some who can not get married, or should not get married, or simply don’t want to get married.

The church must remember that just because a person decides not to marry doesn’t mean there is anything wrong with him or her. In fact, Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 7:8, “I say to the unmarried and widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I.” Paul was single (possibly a widower, based on his previous association with the Sanhedrin), and he encouraged others to remain single, too. There are many to whom God gave the gift of celibacy (such as Anna in Luke 2:36, 37), who have used that gift to serve God more fully than most married people, whose time is necessarily consumed with the responsibilities of family. Paul said,

... One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and his interests are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:32–35).

In this matter of “to marry or not to marry,” Paul is careful to say that he is merely expressing an opinion. “This I say by way of concession, not of command” (7:6); and, “concerning virgins I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion ...” (7:25).

Deciding to marry does not drop one down a spiritual notch. Paul repeatedly defended the institution of marriage (1 Corinthians 7:1–5, 9, 36). He mentioned that his cautions were “in view of the present distress” (7:26) which was likely a localized and temporary persecution. He labeled forced celibacy a “doctrine of demons” (1 Timothy 4:1–4) and in most cases recommended marriage. He advised marriage for widows under the age of sixty (1 Timothy 5:14), he required marriage for those who would lead the church as shepherds (1 Timothy 3:2), and he defended the right of ministers

to marry and support their wives (1 Corinthians 9:5). Careful study shows that 1 Timothy 5:11–12 and Revelation 14:4 do not advocate celibacy.

But Paul also defended singlehood. He only spoke highly of it. He did not call it a curse; he called it a “gift” (1 Corinthians 7:7). Single people can be very powerful workers in God’s house. Long ago, God said through the prophet Isaiah,

Let not ... the eunuch say, “Behold, I am a dry tree.”  
For thus says the Lord,  
“To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths,  
And choose what pleases Me,  
And hold fast My covenant,  
To them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial,  
And a name better than that of sons and daughters;  
I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off”  
(Isaiah 56:3–5).

There are occasions of loneliness and envy that attend the lives of single people. Of course, there are other stresses that they are spared. A single man once joked with me that he doesn’t get to share someone’s bedroom, but he doesn’t have to share someone’s bathroom, either! In any case, God assures the single person that he has important work to accomplish in the Lord’s kingdom, work that will provide eternal blessing.

As we now turn to the couples held forth in the pages of the Bible, may all of us profit from this study.

## *The Basic Unit of Human Experience*

### **Readings:**

- Three passages that declare God's will regarding marriage and sexuality: Romans 1:22–28; 1 Corinthians 6:9–11; and Hebrews 13:4

### **Prep questions:**

1. Why do all cultures recognize marriage?
2. Why does God present the stories of so many married couples in His word?
3. How do God's standard for couplehood and the world's standard differ?
4. What is one thing you hope to get from this study?