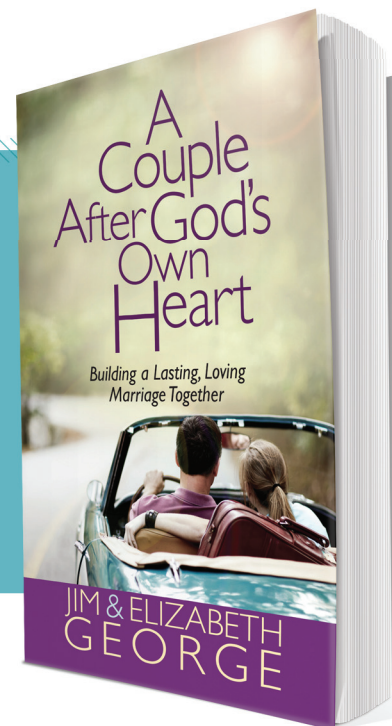


# 5 WAYS *in* 5 DAYS

## TO BECOME A

# CLOSER COUPLE



*Thanks for taking our special challenge to make your marriage even better.*

This 5-day resource, based on our new book *A Couple After God's Own Heart*, is designed to help you discover how to enrich your marriage by looking at the lives of notable couples in the Bible. Even though these marriages occurred thousands of years ago, we can learn a lot that applies to modern relationships. Observing the strengths and weaknesses of couples like Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, and Boaz and Ruth will help you and your spouse:

- Learn the essentials necessary for enjoying an exciting life together.
- Develop better ways to communicate and make solid decisions together.
- Realize the need to draw upon God for unity and strength in hard times.

We hope that as you begin to make your way through these lessons from ancient couples, you will commit to building a closer marriage that lasts. We've included a life-lesson for each day specific to husbands and wives.

We don't have to tell you that no marriage is perfect. But we pray that you, along with us, are progressing toward being a couple after God's own heart. With that in mind, let's look to the life examples of key marriages in the Bible, and discover what it takes to be *a couple after God's own heart!*

Blessings!

*Jim & Elizabeth George*

## Day 1 - Adam & Eve

# BRIDGE THE COMMUNICATION GAP

**I**n the idyllic sin-free beauty of the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were the first married couple who had more blessings than they could imagine. They had no experience with evil or cunning or with liars and deceivers. There was only one command that affected their lives. God explicitly laid down the law for living in the garden. Do—eat anything you want and eat as much as you like. Don’t—eat from just this one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God even told Adam the consequence of disregarding His command—you will die (Genesis 2:15-17).

Yet, one day, Eve found herself separated from Adam and face-to-face with a talking beast, the serpent, who said, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1) Surely Adam and Eve had often—maybe even daily—passed by that “special” tree. Surely they had multiple opportunities to talk about the tree and its significance, about what God had cautioned regarding its fruit. Surely they had discussed and recalled that God had given Adam the prohibition regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The instruction was a mere four words long—“You shall not eat.”

**Adam and Eve were the first married couple who had more blessings than they could imagine.**

Temptation often comes in disguise, quite unexpectedly. Speaking through the serpent, Satan began his attack of sly, veiled slander and lies against God. Evidently, Eve was not alarmed by the snake because she was apparently drawn in by a familiar presence. God had created life and order. But Satan now brought death and chaos.

Either Adam did a poor job of communicating this simple warning to Eve, or she chose to forget—or dismiss—parts of God’s command. In fact, she created what she obviously thought was a new-and-improved version, adding, “...nor shall you touch it, lest you die.” That was not in God’s original command. Whatever happened, and whoever was at fault, Eve minimized their privilege to eat freely in the garden, added the prohibition about touching the fruit, and downgraded the penalty of God’s original command from “You will die” to “You might die.”

Eve was deceived by the snake and disobeyed God—she ate the forbidden fruit. That was Step 1 of her slide into sin, which was followed by Step 2 – Eve offered the fruit to Adam, who ate with full knowledge that his action was wrong (1 Timothy 2:14).

We don’t know if Eve knew she was wrong and presented the fruit to Adam because sinners love company. Or, since she didn’t die right away after eating the tasty fruit that she wanted to share it with her husband. Whatever the reason, Eve gave it to Adam, and he ate. Did they experience instant gratification? No. Instead, they experienced instant awareness of sin as the eyes of both of them were opened (Genesis 3:6-7). Talk about a horror story—and it’s one that still affects all people—and couples—today as sin was ushered into the world and separated mankind from God.

There is so much in the lives and marriage of Adam and Eve that you and your spouse will never be able to relate to. No other couple was created by God out of dust and out of bone. And no other couple had the chance to live in a perfect world. And no other couple ever walked and talked with God—literally!

However, all couples can certainly identify with Adam and Eve's failure—to one another and to God. We can recall bad choices we made that had lasting consequences on our marriage, our children, our finances, our health, and our job. We can point to something we did or didn't do that changed the course of our life forever. Keep this perspective in mind as you check out some of the life lessons you can take away from the original "couple after God's own heart."

### Lessons for Wives from Eve ~~~

Always Ask. We can certainly see from Eve's mother-of-all-blunders how quickly things can go downhill when we as couples don't communicate. The Bible teaches that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man (1 Corinthians 11:3). A husband is responsible for his wife. So ask your husband when you are unsure.

I can't count the number of times I've screamed at myself, "Elizabeth, don't be an Eve! Find out what Jim thinks." I've learned (like Eve did—the hard way) to ask first, act second. Of course, our goal as a couple is to have the same mind. And I admit, things go very well when I ask Jim, "Honey, what do you think I should do?" and he gives me an answer that I like. But I've also learned to listen to his answers and his reasons, and to respect his thinking even when I don't like or agree with his answers.

So, when in doubt, check it out. Even if there's no doubt, it's still a good thing to run issues, concerns, and daily decisions by your husband. Whatever you're facing or wondering about—how to discipline the kids, whether or not to lay out a certain amount of money for some item, or if you should go back to school, change jobs, join an organization, serve on a committee—ask! Your aim is to be partners through life, and as partners, you want to move forward in step, as a unified force.

**Your aim is  
to be partners  
through life,  
and as partners,  
you want to move  
forward in step,  
as a unified force.**

### Lessons for Husbands from Adam ~~~

Be available and open. Adam was there...but he wasn't there. Sure, he had a job to do, but he either didn't see what was happening between Eve and the serpent, or he saw them talking and chose not to get involved. After all, he was doing what God had asked him to do! As men, we are generally by nature nomadic creatures. We love to hike, go on adventures, travel, and we have no problem moving from place to place. Women, by contrast, tend to prefer roots and routine. They like everything to be in its place, all neat and orderly with as few ripples as possible. Adam, as our prototype, was out naming the animals, while Eve was left alone to wander in the garden.

How can you be available to your wife if you or both of you are working at jobs and separated for part of the day—or longer periods of time? One vital thing you can do as a leader is develop some basic ground rules for being there for her. Maybe you call her a couple times a day to see how she's doing. That's one way Elizabeth and I keep in touch during our crazy days. On more than one occasion, that timely phone call helped us clear up a problem, answer a concern, discuss how to proceed on a project or responsibility, or how to handle a “kid issue.” Or, best of all, it gave us another opportunity to say, “I love you.”

**One vital thing you can do as a leader is develop some basic ground rules for being there for her.**

Men are often lumped into the non-communicative camp. If this is the case, we encourage men to reveal and communicate their inner selves. God intended the two to be one, but until a husband allows his wife into his inner thoughts—to really know the whole person—he is withholding something that would make them better and closer friends—best friends.

If you can talk about your problems, you can solve them, even if you agree that the solution is to get some advice to help you move forward. Just as communication is the key to your marriage, it is also a key to setting a plan for growth. Talk about what each of you is or isn't doing in the spiritual growth department. Then talk about what you wish would happen, what you think it would take to grow. Talk about what kinds of materials you could use and tools that would help (maybe a Bible with study notes, a Bible reading plan, a devotional on the names or attributes of God, or the life of Christ that you can read together). You are a unique couple, so aim for a plan that works well for the two of you to become a couple after God's own heart.



## Day 2 - Abraham & Sarah

### IS IT A GREAT IDEA OR A GOD IDEA?

**W**hen we first meet Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 11:29-30, their introduction and history is brief. But, the story of Abraham and Sarah and their glowing faith spreads across 13 chapters in Genesis, the largest amount of space given to any of the couples in the Bible.

One thing we can definitely appreciate about the saga of this couple is that you get to examine a husband and wife who finished the marriage marathon. Their portraits hang forever in God's "Hall of Faith" (Hebrews 11:8-12). You are allowed to travel right alongside them through their thick-and-thin, better-and-worse, day-in-day-out challenges. You witness their problems, watch how they handled—or mishandled—their trials, and learn from the outcomes. You see a couple that is committed to God and to each other wade through problem after problem, fail one another and God (more than once!), and still weather every storm and come out of each test...together, stronger, and faithful!

Sometimes, couples make poor decisions in marriage by confusing a "great idea" with God's idea. Like all couples, Abraham and Sarah were a husband and wife who had several opportunities within their lifetime to learn what it meant to be a couple after God's own heart.

God gave Abraham an initial command: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you... I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing" (Genesis 12:1-3).

Abraham and Sarah had acted on God's command to leave Ur and, as a couple—as partners in faith—they had boldly followed after God's own heart. Then bam! They had barely arrived at their destination when they were faced with a famine. What a shock after having lived for so long in the Euphrates River valley. Famine? Their homeland knew no such thing!

What were they to do? The logical next step would have been to go to a place where they could find food. But there is no record that Abraham, "the friend of God" (James 2:23), the man God spoke to multiple times, reached out to the Lord for any guidance in this matter. So without even consulting the one true God, who had started them off on this journey, they had the great idea to head for Egypt and pretend to be sister and brother rather than husband and wife.

What happened? When the couple arrived in Egypt, Pharaoh decided that sister Sarah would make a great addition to his harem. Abraham's great idea wasn't God's idea and certainly wreaked havoc on their marriage. God graciously rescued them from the perilous situation.

**Abraham  
and Sarah  
weather every  
storm and come  
out of each  
test...together,  
stronger, and  
faithful!**

Fast forward about one decade. For ten years Sarah and Abraham lived with God's promise of an heir...but Sarah was still barren. We can be sure Sarah cared—deeply—that she had no children. She gave the problem a lot thought and came up with what she thought was a great idea for getting an heir. She would offer her maid, Hagar, to Abraham to impregnate, yet the child would be his and Sarah's. Why not follow the culturally accepted practice of the day and use a substitute to conceive and give birth to a child? Once again, there is no record that Sarah or Abraham—partners in faith—consulted with God.

## Lesson for Wives from Sarah ~~~

Beware of your great ideas. Sarah is not alone in this “beware” category! Eve has also won awards in this uncoveted-award category. We don't know exactly what happened, but one day Sarah just snapped and out of nowhere—in spite of all the repeated promises from God Himself—she had the “greatest” of all great ideas: “I'll get Abraham to have a baby with my maid!” Nothing but trouble came from the birth of Ishmael—trouble that has lasted more than 4,000 years (in the form of the ongoing conflict between the Arabs and Jews).

When you have a great idea, don't do anything until you have followed a few fundamental steps of wisdom:

**Stop**—don't do anything.  
**Wait**—only fools rush in.  
**Pray**—for God's leading.  
**Search the Scriptures**—for what God says about it.  
**Seek counsel**—from wise people.



**Remember your goal—to be a partner to your husband.**

Then run it by your husband instead of making an outright announcement or demanding your way. Remember your goal—to be a partner to your husband.

## Lessons for Husbands from Abraham ~~~

Diligently manage your resources. One area of married life where it is easy to confuse a great idea with God's idea is with finances. For instance, is it a good idea to make that purchase? To make that investment? Go on that vacation? Is it a great idea to work extra hours? Change jobs? Rely on dual incomes? These are questions God can help you answer.

There is nothing in the Bible that says you must be poor financially. In fact, the Bible exalts hard work and thrift, and points to such management as being rewarded by God's blessings. Abraham was never obsessed or lazy with riches, even though he was a wealthy man. But he was faithful to manage his possessions carefully. Today it's easy for couples to chase after money, to sell their souls for a big house, fine cars or boats, fancy vacations...and the list goes on and on. Because money is such a big—and daily—issue in marriage, here are a few things to consider as a couple:

First, evaluate your hearts, individually and as a couple. Seek contentment. Make every endeavor to follow the apostle Paul's motto: “I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content” (Philippians 4:11).

Second, determine what you need, not what you want. It's amazing during a financial recession or depression how little we decide we can live with and how much we can do without. This should be our attitude at all times.

**Determine what  
you need, not  
what you want.**

Third, if you are in serious debt, eliminate credit card spending as much as possible and pay cash for your purchases. It's too easy to flash "plastic money"—and you really pay for it later! Also, you'll spend less when you pay with cash because you generally have less cash with you, and you're hyper-aware of every "real" dollar you fork out.

Fourth, but definitely not last, give or tithe a portion of every paycheck. For example, Abraham gave ten percent of the spoils from a victory over marauding bandits to Melchizedek, "the priest of God Most High" (Genesis 14:18).

As the husband of your household, you are responsible for the way your family's income is managed. Be faithful with this stewardship. And enroll your wife's help in controlling expenses. Set goals regarding your finances—what and where you should give, how much savings you should have on hand, what your household budget should look like. If you work on this together, you just may avoid the biggest culprit on the things couples argue about most—money!



## Day 3 - Isaac & Rebekah

### PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST

**M**arriage is often described as a long-term roller-coaster ride. There are always ups and downs. If you look at the first half of their marriage, the relationship between the Old Testament couple Isaac and Rebekah would seem like a match made in heaven. They loved each other and settled into a beautiful life together. But, later in their marriage, there was one issue that caused concern and it reared its head every single day...barrenness. After 20 years of marriage, Rebekah was still without children.

You'll be happy to know that Isaac rose to the test and did the best thing anyone can do in a tough, impossible-looking situation—he turned to God in prayer. And it appears that his was not a one-time prayer of “Oh, by the way, Lord, Rebekah is barren. Can You do something about it?” No, it seems that Isaac earnestly and continually pleaded with God. And the outcome? God answered with twins!

Yet while the twins were still in her womb, they were already struggling with each other. Rebekah, being a first-time mother-to-be, wasn't sure what was going on. So she went to the Lord with her problem and inquired of Him. And God answered: “Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger” (Genesis 25:23).

From the beginning, Isaac and Rebekah's twin boys struggled and were opposites in just about all categories—in character, manners, and habits. And each boy appealed to the personality of one of the parents. Before their sons were born, Isaac and Rebekah had centered all their love on each other. Yet as parenting became more of a focus in their lives, their love seems to have shifted and began to revolve around their children. The Bible says Isaac loved Esau, and Rebekah loved Jacob.

What devastating words! And what a sad scene—a family unit made up of divided love, with each boy only half-loved. Could anything good possibly come from this kind of warped affection?

We know that God told Rebekah that Esau (the firstborn) would serve Jacob (the second born). But, there is no record that God communicated this same information to Isaac or that Rebekah relayed this news to her husband. It seems that Isaac didn't know, for years later, when it came time for Isaac to bestow the right of the firstborn intended for Esau, Rebekah went into high gear to manipulate her favorite son—Jacob—into the position of blessing. Talk about dysfunctional! A couple not sharing important messages and events. Parents showing favoritism. A spouse trying to deceive and manipulate a partner.

**The relationship between the Old Testament couple Isaac and Rebekah would seem like a match made in heaven.**

The endgame? Ultimately, Rebekah got what she wanted. Jacob did receive the blessing. But what a price she paid! She alienated her son, Esau. Out of anger, Esau arranged a marriage with a godless foreigner, knowing this would displease his parents. And out of anger, Esau made a vow to kill his brother. Jacob was forced to flee for his life, and Rebekah never saw her favorite son again. What a tragic turn of events! Her last recorded words in the Bible express great sorrow and regret: “I am weary of my life” (Genesis 27:46).

## Lessons for Wives from Rebekah ~~~

Child-centered parenting can endanger your marriage and family. When it came to her twin sons, Rebekah played favorites. In her household, Isaac loved Esau because he was a hunter and provided him with tasty food. And Rebekah loved Jacob because he loved to hang out in the kitchen and help his mom—he was a “momma’s boy.”

When parents—one or both—favor any child over another, they cause friction and emotional pain. Ask God to supply you with His fruit of the Spirit, love, for each of your children. God’s love is pure love, and it contains no partiality. With the Spirit’s love, it is impossible to love one child more than another.

What more can you do? Creating a prayer notebook with a page for each child will help ensure each child is at the forefront of your mind and heart. And on your husband’s page, write down a reminder to pray fervently that he will love each of his children. Every child should have two parents who love him or her.



**Ask God to  
supply you with  
His fruit of the  
Spirit, love, for  
each of your  
children.**

While most parents realize that showing favoritism is a terrible thing, couples often overlook another impact that child-centered parenting can have on a marriage. Rebekah and Isaac had replaced faithfulness to one another with a near idolatrous adoration of their children.

Isaac and Rebekah’s misdirected focus drove the boys to make poor choices that deepened their character flaws. Jacob became a trickster, and Esau grew into a wild rebel who married godless women and wanted to kill his brother. The family was torn apart as Jacob was forced to run for his life. Such a tragic ending after a thrilling, hopeful beginning.

When a couple’s attention is placed solely on their children to the detriment of their marriage, the children are hindered rather than helped. There is a lack of a healthy relational example to follow, a less unified front of godly decision making, and unrealistic expectations placed on the parent-child relationship. Don’t endanger or lose your family for lack of love when Christ has enough love for everyone!

## Lessons for Husbands from Isaac ~~~

Gentleness is strength under control. This quality speaks of an ability to stay calm, no matter what happens. Gentleness is also a sign of godliness, and is listed as a fruit of the Spirit in the New Testament (Galatians 5:23). A godly husband is to be a leader who is marked by gentleness and a calm manner. Isaac exemplified this quality—we could say he was a true gentleman, a gentle man. We see this virtue in Isaac as he is meditating in a field along the caravan route leading to Canaan. This route brought Rebekah to where Isaac was walking and thinking. We see it again in his sensitivity to his wife's barrenness. Moved by her condition, he prayed for Rebekah's childlessness, and God answered his prayer (Genesis 25:21).

Humility is a noble and biblical quality every man should cultivate and possess. Most wives would love their husbands to show a little more gentleness and sensitivity to their needs and those of the children. Thinking, pondering, meditating, and praying are all aspects that signify a heart of humility.

However, this same quiet spirit can have its dark side. Like his father Abraham, Isaac asked his wife, Rebekah, to pretend they were brother and sister out of fear that he might be killed because of her beauty (Genesis 26:7). Isaac's conduct provides a word of caution: A quiet spirit of meekness is noble until it becomes a passive spirit that fails to lead, fails to make decisions, fails to stand up for what is right, true, and godly, and, as in Isaac's case, fails to protect the honor and safety of your wife. Pursue the godly quality of gentleness, remembering that it is strength under control.

**Humility is a noble and biblical quality every man should cultivate and possess.**



## Day 4 - Boaz & Ruth

# THE LOVE THAT TRUST BUILT

**A** long time ago, two widows journeyed to settle afresh in Bethlehem, the only nearby land that promised food in an era of famine and tough times. Naomi, a mother-in-law, widowed for 10 years but embittered anew by the recent loss of her two sons. She was accompanied by Ruth, her faithful daughter-in-law still mourning the loss of her young husband.

They arrived tired and destitute after weeks of travel. Where could they find food? The Law of Moses commanded that the corners of every field should not be harvested so the poor could come behind the harvesters and gather up the leftovers. Ruth faithfully gleaned leftover grain from the fields of Naomi's relative, Boaz, so she and Naomi could have food to eat.

Bethlehem was a small village in which everyone knew each other, so when Boaz arrived at the field to offer a blessing to his workers, it didn't take long for him to notice there was a stranger among them, Ruth. He inquired about Ruth and began to take an interest in her. And so begins one of the most romantic tales in the Bible. If you are unfamiliar with this story, check out the short, but powerful book of Ruth in the Old Testament. It ends with the marriage of Ruth to Boaz, establishing them as a couple after God's own heart and as ancestors of Christ.

It is also a tale of God's faithfulness—to His people and to His plan. Two poverty-stricken widows arrived in Bethlehem with little more than the thin threads on their backs. They had no husbands, no family, no funds, no food. All they had was the willingness of the younger and stronger of the two women to labor in the fields, gleaning the leftover grain for the poor.

But God was aware. God was guiding. He was leading. He was at work. He brought forth a godly man to redeem and care for this brave feminine team of in-laws who were a part of the bloodline from which the Savior of the world would come.

In this short book of the Bible, we are blessed by a real glimpse of God's loving care and oversight of His people. We are blessed by watching God work on His greater plan—a plan that would lead to Jesus. We are blessed to see a woman and her mother-in-law working as a loving, helpful, and respectful team. We are blessed to see up close the many worthy character qualities in the man Boaz. And we are blessed to witness the courtship and marriage of Boaz and Ruth, along with the arrival of their first baby, as God blessed His faithful people.

Now, for a few lessons in love.

**We are blessed  
to witness the  
courtship and  
marriage of  
Boaz and Ruth,  
as God blessed  
His faithful  
people.**

## Lessons for Wives from Ruth ~~~

In-laws are family. Ruth was faced with a choice. Her husband was dead, and her husband's mother, Naomi, also a widow, was heading back to her homeland. Naomi had given both her daughters-in-law an open door and her blessing to go back to their people, to their families. Ruth's sister-in-law chose to walk through that door and return to her family home. But Ruth chose to go with Naomi, and what's even more important, Ruth chose Naomi's God.

In spite of all the in-law jokes you hear, your in-laws are still your family and should be treated as such—with love and respect. Ruth chose to make Naomi her second mom, and followed Naomi's advice and counsel even when it meant sacrificing her pride. The two of them became quite a team as together they took on the life-and-death challenge of survival.

**Your in-laws are still your family and should be treated as such—with love and respect.**

Hopefully you have a mom-in-law who's like Naomi—one you can confide in, lean on when you need advice, and trust. I know Jim's mom—my mother-in-law—was one of these special people. But if your in-laws are not as friendly or supportive or helpful as you would hope, please, don't give up on them! Make an effort to stay in touch through phone calls, cards, emails, and visits. And you'll definitely want them to see their exceptionally smart and good-looking grandkids!

Now, if you happen to be a mother-in-law yourself, look to Naomi as your model. Be your daughter-in-law's Number One cheerleader, the president of her support group. Like Naomi, if you are there for your kids and their spouses, they will become treasured additions to your family.

## Lessons for Husbands from Boaz ~~~

Build trust through diligence. Boaz is described as “a man of great wealth” (Ruth 2:1), and we see him carefully and thoughtfully overseeing his property. We see here that he is a man of diligence and purposeful hard-work.

**Build trust through diligence.**

Proverbs 10:4 tells us that laziness, or a “slack hand,” leads to poverty. God expects His men to work and work hard to provide for their wives and families. We are told, “If anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Timothy 5:8). God even goes so far as to command, “If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10). You may never be a wealthy man, but as you are faithful and conscientious in your work, God will bless your diligence and provide for you and your family.

A diligent man will be successful not only at work, but also at home. A diligent husband pays attention to his wife and her needs and safety. An area where husbands would be wise to be especially diligent is in the area of appreciating and praising their wife. Boaz pointed out Ruth's strong qualities and spoke of them to cheer her on: “It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before” (2:11). Surely these words of encouragement were like raindrops on the parched desert sand of Ruth's heart.

Of all the people in the world who need to be encouraged, it is our wives. Their work is never done. Their roles and responsibilities never seem to end! As a husband, you are to be her Number One cheerleader. Open your eyes to all she does for you and others. Then count the ways you can openly and personally praise and encourage her.

And a diligent dad purposefully invests time in his relationships with his children, in their character development, and their training in taking care of their responsibilities. A diligent overseer takes care of his home, property, and finances. Take a look around. Is anything—or anyone—being neglected? If so, take note and take care of it. Be diligent.

Marriage is a contract in which two people vow fidelity to each other. A husband who is faithful in what he says and does can be trusted, and trust is the glue that holds a marriage together. A wife will follow her husband to the ends of the earth if she knows she can trust him and that he has her best interests at heart at all times.

Trust is fragile. It is slowly obtained over time as you persevere and build up a good track record, but can be lost in an instant. In Boaz and Ruth you have front-row seats for observing diligence, devotion, patience, thoughtfulness, discretion, generosity, compassion, and honesty in a marriage. It's obvious these many godly character qualities combined to create a couple after God's own heart.



## Day 5 - Zechariah & Elizabeth

### PARTNERS WITH A PURE HEART

**Z**echariah and Elizabeth provide an outstanding example of what it looks like to be a couple after God's own heart. Their marriage exhibits what a couple's obedience to God looks like in real, everyday life. Here's what we know about this couple who lived in the hill country of Judah so many centuries ago.

Picture this: It has been 400 years since God last spoke to man. In a backwater part of Israel, a godly but barren couple named Zechariah and Elizabeth are about to be rewarded for their love and devotion. Sure, there was love and devotion for one another. But greater than that, there was love and devotion in both their hearts for God.

Like Adam and Eve, who initially walked with God in the cool of the day and obeyed His commands, Zechariah and Elizabeth also lived obediently, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord (Luke 1:6). As a result God prepared to use them as His instruments to provide the messenger who would announce the coming of God's Son, the Messiah. Light is about to enter darkness!

God sent His angel Gabriel with glad tidings of the soon arrival of the forerunner—the herald—for the Messiah. Gabriel brought the news of a son to the priest, Zechariah. Gabriel privately appeared to Zechariah while he was performing his duties in the temple at the altar of incense.

Responding as anyone in his right mind would at the sight of a celestial being, Zechariah was afraid. But the angel calmed him with some good news, saying, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John” (verse 13).

Maybe Zechariah's age or his long years of disappointment weighed on him, but for whatever reason, he voiced doubt to the angel sent from God. He wondered how he and Elizabeth could possibly have a baby at this stage of their lives. First, Gabriel assured him that the message was true because it came straight from the mouth of God Himself. Then he announced that Zechariah would be mute until the child's birth.

Unlike her husband, Elizabeth responded with complete assurance that God was the source of her joy: “Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people” (verse 25). At the time, Elizabeth did not indicate that she knew anything about the destiny of her son. However, because she, even before Zechariah was able to speak, knew that the baby's name was to be John (verse 60).

**Zechariah and Elizabeth's marriage exhibits what a couple's obedience to God looks like in real, everyday life.**

At last, Elizabeth's time arrived and she gave birth to a son, just as the angel Gabriel had prophesied. When the people asked for the baby's name, she replied, "John" (verse 60). The crowd thought this was a highly unusual response. Why, shouldn't the boy be named after his father or a relative? Why John? Where did that come from?

They then asked Zechariah about the boy's name, and he confirmed Elizabeth's reply by writing on a tablet, "His name is John" (verse 63). Immediately—and miraculously—Zechariah's voice returned. In awe, the people knew something wondrous was happening. Zechariah, like Elizabeth, was filled with the Holy Spirit and uttered a marvelous prophecy about God's promise of salvation for the nation. He revealed that this child, John, would be called "the prophet of the Highest; for [he] will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins" (verses 76-77). Later, Jesus gave this tribute and evaluation of their son, John: "Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11).

### Lessons for Wives from Elizabeth ~~~

Grab hold of God's strength to walk on and grow spiritually. Elizabeth was a daughter of a priest of Israel. She could trace her lineage back to Aaron, the first high priest of Israel. And she had married a respected priest. Everyone had predicted a long life with many children for this special couple. But sadly, real life hadn't turned out as predicted. And instead of seeing her as blessed, the religious community saw Elizabeth's barrenness as a curse from God.



**Grab hold of  
God's strength  
to walk on and  
grow spiritually.**

How is life turning out for you? Maybe your dreams are all coming true, or maybe you feel like you're still waiting for life to get started. Maybe you feel like there's too much pain and disillusionment to handle. Life has a way of putting detours, roadblocks, and immovable barriers in your path. This was Elizabeth's story—a life of dashed dreams. But rather than have a pity party, Elizabeth chose to gain spiritual strength from her condition. She refused to allow her sorrow to drag her down. Instead, she reached out to grab hold of God's strength.

How do you cope with discouragement, disappointment, adversity, and dashed dreams? Take a lesson from Elizabeth, whose name means "God is my oath." No matter what your situation, look to God for strength each day. A wife after God's own heart does not look at the day's problems; she looks at the power of her God to assist her with those problems! Like Elizabeth, cling to God, whatever your circumstance.

Elizabeth endured years of scorn from her community. How could she have weathered the ridicule? Luke 1:6 answers that for us: She walked "in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord," which meant she was blameless. She didn't succumb to jealousy, or lash out, retaliate, try to defend herself or set the people straight, or spend hours each day thinking of ways to get even with her tormentors. She didn't blame Zechariah, and she didn't blame God, walk away from Him, or give up.

No, Elizabeth chose to spend the hours of her day drawing near to God, refusing to worry about what she didn't have, and focusing on what she did have. She didn't care what the people were thinking about her, but she sure cared what God thought about her! Her heart was devoted to living for God and according to His Word.

Elizabeth was an amazing woman and a wife after God's own heart. She matched her husband, the priest, with her own spiritual maturity...which is a good word for all Christian wives! Even in marriage and maybe as a result of marriage, you need to be purposefully growing spiritually.

You cannot control your husband's growth, but you can control yours. What will that growth produce in you? You will become a wife who walks by the Spirit. A wife filled with God's love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—His fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). You do your part to be blameless, and pray that your husband will want to follow Zechariah's example in his walk with God.

### Lessons for Husbands from Zechariah ~~~

Commit to praying for your wife. You would expect a godly husband to pray faithfully for his wife, wouldn't you? Especially if he knew there was a deep burden she was carrying day after day. Zechariah did. When the angel Gabriel spoke to Zechariah, he said, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer is heard" (Luke 1:13). It's obvious from the angel's words that Zechariah had prayed for Elizabeth to bear a child. He may have been praying for this very thing for years, and he may have been praying for it while he stood where the angel found him, right there before the altar while tending his priestly duties. Zechariah's prayers for his wife are a model for your mission as a husband.

**Commit to  
praying for  
your wife.**

Do you want to be a more caring and loving husband? Then your first assignment is to determine the Number One burden, challenge, or heartache your wife is dealing with, and then faithfully pray for her. Maybe you know what it is, and you just haven't been as faithful as you should be to present her difficult life-situation to God for His help.

So, now is definitely the time to start. And if you don't know what her problem is, ask her...and then commit to diligently praying for her regarding this matter. Imagine what it will mean to her to know that you are joining with her to carry her greatest struggle...together. And to top it off, to know that at least one person—the most important person in her life, you!—is faithfully presenting her problem to the loving, all-powerful God of the universe for His help.

## YOU DID IT!

Thank you for taking 5 days to learn 5 ways to become closer as a couple. We hope this material has blessed your marriage and sparked new ideas to make your relationship even stronger. If you enjoyed these lessons, get even more content in the new book by

Elizabeth and Jim George, *A Couple After God's Own Heart*.

For more information, visit: [www.ElizabethGeorge.com](http://www.ElizabethGeorge.com).

# ABOUT THE GEORGES



**ELIZABETH AND JIM GEORGE** ARE BESTSELLING AUTHORS AND NATIONAL SPEAKERS DEDICATED TO HELPING PEOPLE LIVE A LIFE AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART.



Together, they have written over 70 books with more than 8 million copies sold. For over 30 years, the teachings and steadfast example of Elizabeth and Jim have helped countless men and women...

- Simplify life by focusing on God's priorities.
- Appreciate God's Word and apply it to everyday situations.
- Respond to circumstances with confidence by seeing yourself through God's loving eyes.
- Increase closeness in marriage by serving and honoring each other.
- Powerfully shape the hearts of children and teenagers.
- Enjoy greater intimacy with God.

In the midst of their busy writing schedule, Elizabeth and Jim love spending time with their two married daughters and eight grandchildren, taking daily walks along golden sands, and enjoying the beautiful Hawaiian sunsets. They divide time residing in Honolulu, Hawaii and the Washington State coast.

**WALK WITH ELIZABETH AND JIM AS THEY JOYFULLY LEAD YOU  
TO LIVE A LIFE AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART!**

