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Lessons From Old Testament Couples*

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Introduction

For Better or for Worse: Lessons From Old Testament Couples

In his will, German poet Heinrich Heine gave his land, home, and wealth to the man who married his widow. He said that the reason he did this was to make sure that there would be at least one person who mourned his death.

Sin has hurt marriage. From the Bible and Ellen G. White's writings, we understand that God wanted marriage to be one of the best parts of human life. God designed (made) marriage to show us our need for Him in ways that nothing else could. After the earth came forth from His creative Word, God gave us marriage, because He loved us. Marriage was to be the best blessing of all that God gave us.

Of course, from the time Adam and Eve ate the fruit, things went from bad to worse. In the Bible story, right after the first couple sinned, sin quickly influenced¹ the way they acted toward each other. "Then both of them knew things they had never known before. They realized they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together and made clothes for themselves" (Genesis 3:7, NIV). Nothing between men and women and husbands and wives has been the same since. Marriage should have been joy and freedom. But, instead, marriage has become suffering and hopelessness. This is not always true though! In many cases marriages are wonderful examples of spiritual unity² and physical (body) unity³ that make humans happy. But still, far too often, suffering happens in marriage.

This quarter we are going to look at married couples in the Old Testament. Their marriages are not always a study on what a marriage should be. Rather, we will study the lives of married couples to learn lessons about faith, works, obedience,⁴ hope, trust, and love. Along the way, we hope to learn from these Old Testament couples what it means to be a follower of the Lord in a sinful world.

It makes good sense to use marriage as a starting point for learning how to follow the Lord. This is because marriage is so basic to human life. Marriage forms the beginning of the family. Out of the family we have children. Marriage is often used in the Bible to teach different spiritual⁵ truths. So, marriage seems to be a good starting point for learning how to be a follower of the Lord.

1. influenced—had power or an effect over persons or things.

2. spiritual unity—the condition of being joined together with God as one and letting Him live out His holy life through you.

3. physical unity—the body of the husband and the body of the wife being joined together as one.

4. obedience—doing what is asked of you.

5. spiritual—having to do with God; holy.

Of course, not everyone is married. Many of the great Bible leaders—Daniel, John the Baptist, and even Jesus—were not married. (Maybe we should do a quarter on the singles in the Bible!) But we can learn principles⁶ from studying these marriages. And we can use these principles in different parts of our lives.

So, in the next few months we will explore the lives of different couples—Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Ruth and Boaz, even Ahab and Jezebel, and more. We will learn useful truths from the Bible that we can use in our daily relationships⁷ with one another and with the Lord. It is the Lord who says to His people: “As a young man gets married to a young woman, your people will marry you. As a groom is happy with his bride, I will be full of joy over you” (Isaiah 62:5, NIrV).

Our two authors this quarter have been happily married for many years. Gordon Christo is director of college education of the Southern Asia Division. His wife, Rosenita, works in the division office. They have two grown children.

6. principles—basic rules or standards of good behavior.

7. relationships—our connections (ties) to other people and how deep our feelings are for each one of them.