

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *JESUS IN ME*

ANNE GRAHAM LOTZ  
& RACHEL-RUTH LOTZ WRIGHT

# PREPARING TO MEET JESUS

A 21-DAY CHALLENGE

TO MOVE YOUR FAITH FROM  
SALVATION TO TRANSFORMATION

SNEAK  
PEEK



SAMPLE  
ONLY

UNCORRECTED  
PROOF

BOOKS BY ANNE GRAHAM LOTZ

*Jesus Followers* (co-authored  
with Rachel-Ruth Lotz  
Wright)

*The Light of His Presence*

*Jesus in Me: Experiencing  
the Holy Spirit as a  
Constant Companion*

*The Vision of His Glory:  
Finding Hope Through the  
Revelation of Jesus Christ  
God's Story*

*Just Give Me Jesus*

*Pursuing MORE of Jesus*

*Heaven: My Father's House*

*Why? Trusting God When  
You Don't Understand*

*The Magnificent Obsession:  
Embracing the God-Filled  
Life*

*Expecting to See Jesus:  
A Wake-Up Call for  
God's People*

*Wounded by God's People:  
Discovering How God's Love  
Heals Our Hearts*

*The Daniel Prayer:  
Prayer That Moves Heaven  
and Changes Nations*

*The Daniel Key:  
Twenty Choices That Make  
All the Difference*

*The Joy of My Heart:  
Meditating Daily on  
God's Word*

*Fixing My Eyes on Jesus:  
Daily Moments in His Word*

*Into the Word*

*Daily Light*

*Storming the Gates of  
Heaven: Prayer That Claims  
the Promises of God*

CHILDREN'S BOOK

*Heaven:  
God's Promise for Me*

# Preparing *to* Meet Jesus



*A 21-Day Challenge  
to Move from Salvation  
to Transformation*

Anne Graham Lotz  
*and*  
Rachel-Ruth Lotz Wright



MULTNOMAH

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978 by Biblica Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. (www.zondervan.com). The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica Inc.™ Scripture quotations marked (NKJV) are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Copyright © 2023 by Anne Graham Lotz and  
Rachel-Ruth Lotz Wright

All rights reserved.

Published in the United States by Multnomah, an imprint of  
Random House, a division of Penguin Random House LLC.

MULTNOMAH is a registered trademark and the M colophon is a  
trademark of Penguin Random House LLC.

Published in association with the literary agency of Alive Literary  
Agency, 5001 Centennial Blvd., No. 50742, Colorado Springs, CO  
80908, www.aliveliterary.com.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
Names: Lotz, Anne Graham, author. | Wright, Rachel-Ruth Lotz,  
author.

Title: Preparing to meet Jesus: a 21-day challenge to move from  
salvation to transformation / Anne Graham Lotz and  
Rachel-Ruth Lotz Wright.

Description: First edition. | Colorado Springs, Colorado: Multnomah,  
[2023] | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2022055935 | ISBN 9780525651956  
(hardcover; acid-free paper) | ISBN 9780525652281 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Spiritual life—Christianity—Meditations.

Classification: LCC BV4501.3 .L675 2023 |

DDC 242—dc23/eng/20230217

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2022055935>

Printed in Canada on acid-free paper

[waterbrookmultnomah.com](http://waterbrookmultnomah.com)

2 4 6 8 9 7 5 3 1

First Edition

*Book design by Susan Turner*

Most Multnomah books are available at special quantity discounts  
for bulk purchase for premiums, fundraising, and corporate and  
educational needs by organizations, churches, and businesses. Special  
books or book excerpts also can be created to fit specific needs. For  
details, contact [specialmarketscms@penguinrandomhouse.com](mailto:specialmarketscms@penguinrandomhouse.com).



*Dedicated  
to  
Jesus Followers*

Hallelujah!  
For our Lord God Almighty reigns.  
Let us rejoice and be glad  
and give him glory!  
For the wedding of the Lamb has come,  
and his bride has made herself ready.

Revelation 19:6–7

## CONTENTS



|  |     |
|--|-----|
| INTRODUCTION: The One the Father Seeks | 3   |
| DAY 1 A Family Member                  | 29  |
| DAY 2 Faithful in the Day-to-Day       | 37  |
| DAY 3 Beautiful . . . on the Inside    | 44  |
| DAY 4 Purified                         | 51  |
| DAY 5 Spiritually Filled               | 58  |
| DAY 6 Kind                             | 65  |
| DAY 7 A Humble Servant                 | 71  |
| DAY 8 Responsive to Needs              | 77  |
| DAY 9 Honest                           | 84  |
| DAY 10 Motivated                       | 91  |
| DAY 11 Unashamed                       | 97  |
| DAY 12 Hospitable                      | 103 |
| DAY 13 Eager to Share                  | 110 |
| DAY 14 Authentic                       | 117 |
| DAY 15 A Good Listener                 | 126 |
| DAY 16 Submissive                      | 133 |
| DAY 17 A Blessing to Others            | 141 |

|                                   |             |     |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-----|
| DAY 18                            | Committed   | 148 |
| DAY 19                            | Perseverant | 155 |
| DAY 20                            | Focused     | 163 |
| DAY 21                            | Beloved     | 171 |
| EPILOGUE: Preparing to Meet Jesus |             | 179 |
| NOTES                             |             | 189 |

## Preparing to Meet Jesus

## INTRODUCTION



### The One the Father Seeks

JESUS IS COMING! ALL INDICATORS POINT TO THE FACT that His return is imminent. While expectancy among people of faith worldwide is at a fever pitch, I wonder if you and I are actually prepared for that world-changing, history-altering, heart-stopping moment in time?

Again and again, the Bible tells us that Jesus will come suddenly . . . quickly . . . like a thief in the night . . . and that His followers need to be prepared to meet Him at any moment.

I became a follower of Jesus when I was a young girl. In response to a movie depicting His life, I knelt by my bed in prayer. I knew with deep conviction that the horror of the Cross I had just watched portrayed on television was my fault. Jesus had died in order to take away my sin



and forgive me for all the wrong things I had done. I was acutely aware that if I had been the only sinner in need of saving, He would still have died just for me. So in fear and trembling, I told Him I was sorry for my sin, asked for His forgiveness, and invited Him to come into my heart.

While I was too young to understand the full ramifications of that decision, I had an immediate sense of relief, peace, and joy, as though a burden had been lifted, one I hadn't realized I was carrying. With a heart full of love and gratitude for the One who died for me, I began a lifelong journey to know Him, to serve Him, to obey Him, to please Him, to follow Him, to glorify Him more fully every day.

Now, not only because of my age but also as world events line up with the signs Jesus gave us to indicate we are living at the end of human history, I know with certainty that I will soon meet Him face-to-face. I live on the tiptoe of expectancy that at any moment I might see the One "who loved me and gave himself for me."<sup>1</sup> And I believe that He, too, is filled with eager anticipation as He looks forward to meeting the bride His Father has sought for Him.

### **The Subject of the Search**

What comes to mind as you consider your relationship with Jesus? Did you know that He's not looking to see

how well you follow a list of dos and don'ts? Did you know that a genuine connection with Him transcends denominations and organizations and traditions and rituals? Did you know that it's about an intimate love relationship, like the one between a bridegroom and his bride? In fact, the Bible refers to followers of Jesus as His bride.

Like any bride, I'm a little nervous about meeting the Bridegroom.

I remember the day I married Danny Lotz. My father, who never came upstairs to my bedroom, suddenly appeared in the doorway. He sat on the bed beside me as I told him how nervous and fearful I was. Would Danny find me pleasing? He was almost twelve years older than I was. He had waited a long time to get married. Would I be all he had been longing for in a bride? My father assured me that I would; then he put his arms around me and prayed for me. God answered that prayer. When we met later that evening at the altar, the smile on Danny's face stretched almost from ear to ear!

While I'm eager to see Jesus in person, once again I find myself a little nervous. He has waited a very long time for the wedding. What will that first face-to-face moment be like? Will I be all that He has been looking for . . . longing for . . . in a bride? Will I be pleasing to Him?

That question is of such critical significance that I don't want to leave anything to chance. I want to be ready. I want to prepare now to meet Jesus.

What about you? As you consider meeting Him, what hopes and fears surface from the recesses of your heart? Do you wonder whether He'll be pleased or disappointed as His eyes fall on you? What will be the expression on His face when He sees you? Do you even know what He is looking for in a bride?

If you are a male reader, while you recognize Jesus as your Savior, your dearest Friend, your divine Companion, and your Lord and Master, it may seem a little off-putting to think of Him as your Bridegroom. Let me put you at ease. This is the way He described Himself.<sup>2</sup> Jesus used this term to underscore the fact that our relationship with Him is a love relationship, and the Bible uses the analogy of marriage to describe our relationship with Jesus. Following a well-known passage about marriage, Ephesians 5:32 reveals, "This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church." The church—not the organized church that assembles in buildings, but the collective followers of Jesus—is His bride.

Each of us enters into this relationship when we put our trust in Jesus at the "marriage altar" of the Cross. So whether male or female, Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, weak or strong, young or old, we are each in-

vited to come to the altar, say yes to Jesus, make our vow of commitment to honor, obey, and love Him as long as we live, then enjoy life as the bride of the Son of God, looking forward with eager expectancy to the wedding supper of the Lamb.<sup>3</sup>

### THE INITIATIVE

To be clear, God the Father will not settle for just any bride for His Son. He's looking for one that is holy, cleansed of sin, and at peace with Him.<sup>4</sup> This search for the bride of His choice is illustrated by a beautiful story recorded in Genesis 24 that describes the effort one father made to find the perfect bride for his beloved son. And although the story is a true one, it is also an incredible analogy of our heavenly Father, who has made the supreme effort to find the perfect bride for His Son.

The Genesis account tells of Abraham, whose son Isaac would one day inherit the unique promises, blessings, and covenant relationship with God that had been given to Abraham. As a godly father, Abraham knew it was of preeminent importance that his son have a godly wife. So he took the initiative to search for one.

I have to smile as I remember the initiative my own father took to find a godly husband for me. The first week of the summer following my graduation from high

school, I was free to go out, which I did. Every night. With the same guy. Daddy, who happened to be home at the time rather than traveling as he often did, became alarmed. He knew that the Fellowship of Christian Athletes was having its annual conference across the valley from our home, so he placed a call to the national director and asked if there was a Christian athlete who would take me to one of their meetings. The result? On the last night of the conference, I went to the closing meeting with Danny Lotz. He was the son of a New York City preacher, had won the NCAA basketball championship on an undefeated team at the University of North Carolina, had finished dental school, and was a captain in the air force whose commander allowed him to volunteer for all the FCA summer conferences.

Because my father had arranged for this date, I didn't take it seriously, which meant I was very relaxed. I didn't try to impress Danny in the least. What I found interesting was that we were very comfortable with each other. As we talked, we discovered that we enjoyed the same type of music and the same kinds of foods. But most important, we shared the same faith, which became very apparent at the FCA event. We were led in lively worship, and I was thrilled by the sound of about eight hundred male athletes all singing at the top of their lungs, accentuating their music by stomping their feet and clapping their hands. Then we

listened to testimonies given by well-known professional and college athletes. All in all, it was a thoroughly enjoyable evening. Since Danny returned the next morning to Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico, I thought that was that.

About one month after our initial date, Danny came to visit on leave. Once again, my father was home, and he and Danny seemed to really hit it off. By contrast, I was still somewhat uninterested, primarily because of Danny's age and the fact I was headed to college that fall.

My third meeting with Danny was in Denver, Colorado. I had been at a leadership training institute in California and stopped in Denver to see Daddy and attend the crusade he was holding there. Danny, who had just completed his military commitment and been discharged from the air force, drove up from New Mexico to meet me.

We spent the day together touring the spectacular Rockies nearby; then Danny drove me back to my hotel. As we enjoyed an ice cream soda in the hotel coffee shop, I was taken aback when Danny told me he was in love with me and wanted to marry me. This was our third date! I told him I couldn't care less. He asked if he could pursue the relationship, and I told him it was a free country so he could do what he wanted, but I wasn't going to encourage him.



Afterward I went straight to my father's room and told him what Danny had said. I thought for sure he would pick up the phone and tell Danny it was time for him to leave. Instead, Daddy looked at me and said, "Anne, I think Danny Lotz is the man you are going to marry." Talk about a shock! But deep down, while I can't explain why, I knew what Daddy said was right. A little more than a year later, Danny and I were married, entering into a relationship that lasted until his death forty-nine years later. I will always be grateful that Daddy took the initiative to find a godly man for me.

While I don't necessarily recommend fathers doing what mine did, I can appreciate why Abraham took the initiative to find a godly wife for his son Isaac. Singleness wasn't an option for Isaac, since God had promised Abraham a multitude of descendants through Isaac, who was uniquely the son of promise. This implied that Isaac would have children and therefore would need a wife. But Abraham and Isaac lived in the land of the Canaanites, wicked people given over to obscene, pornographic behavior. Where could a godly woman be found for Isaac to marry? The people who came to Abraham's mind were his own extended family, who lived in Haran, more than 450 miles away.<sup>5</sup>

Since Abraham was too old for such a long journey, he made a bold decision and called for "the chief servant in his household, the one in charge of all that he

had.”<sup>6</sup> While we can’t be certain, it seems likely that this is Eliezer, the servant who would have inherited Abraham’s estate had there been no natural descendant.<sup>7</sup>

### THE INSTRUCTIONS

When the servant answered Abraham’s summons, he received not the customary gracious greeting but a very solemn charge: “I want you to swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac.”<sup>8</sup>

The servant responded by respectfully asking a logical question: “What if the woman is unwilling to come back with me to this land? Shall I then take your son back to the country you came from?”<sup>9</sup> It would seem highly improbable that a young woman suited to be Isaac’s wife would accept a proposal presented by the servant of an unknown relative and forsake her friends, her father’s house, her country, and all that was familiar, and travel hundreds of miles to marry someone she knew nothing about.

But Abraham didn’t waver. He assured the servant that God would “send his angel before you so that you can get a wife for my son from there.”<sup>10</sup> Abraham was

completely confident that God would help the servant on this critical mission, because he was confident that God also wanted a godly wife for his son. As the heir to God's promises and God's covenant, Isaac needed a suitable helper in raising a godly son who would also inherit the covenant blessings. If the servant found the woman and for any reason she was unwilling to accept Abraham's offer of his son, then the servant was released from his obligation and his oath to bring her back.<sup>11</sup>

When Abraham had finished giving the instructions, his servant "took ten of his master's camels and left, taking with him all kinds of good things from his master"—gold, jewelry, linens, silks, spices, and other costly items.<sup>12</sup> Once the servant found the right person, he'd need to make the absent bridegroom attractive to her, so he planned to shower her with gifts to give her some idea of the greatness and wealth of the son and his father.

### **The Significance of the Search**

After a long journey through desert wasteland, bandit territory, and rock-strewn wilderness, the servant finally arrived in the city of Nahor, a suburb of Haran. Fully committed to his task, the servant wasted no time. He went to the city well and had his camels

kneel down.<sup>13</sup> He knew there was no better place to find the woman he was seeking than where women gathered each evening to draw water for their households.

### THE PLACE

While the well was a literal, physical place to draw water, it also has symbolic significance. The Bible describes many divine meetings that took place at a well.<sup>14</sup> The Lord met Hagar at a well when she was running away from Abraham's wife, Sarah. There He established a personal relationship with her. Later, when Hagar was on the desert road after leaving Abraham's household with her son, Ishmael, the Lord provided water from a well and promised to bless her and her son.<sup>15</sup> Abraham's grandson Jacob met the love of his life, Rachel, at a well, where he promptly kissed her.<sup>16</sup> While fleeing from Pharaoh, Moses sat down at a well, where he met his future wife.<sup>17</sup> Beside a well, Gideon heard from God, who commanded him to reduce his army of thirty-two thousand men to three hundred before they were given victory over the invading enemy.<sup>18</sup>

But perhaps the most meaningful of these events took place at Jacob's well in Samaria. In the heat of the noonday sun, a travel-weary Jesus encountered a woman who had come to draw water. He asked her for a drink. In the resulting conversation, Jesus revealed

that physical water doesn't satisfy the thirst of the heart and soul. He then clearly stated that anyone who drank the water He offered would never thirst again, because "the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."<sup>19</sup> Later, Scripture makes clear that the water He was referring to was the indwelling life of the Holy Spirit.<sup>20</sup> The woman was amazed! She ran to tell those who lived in her city that she had met the Messiah, and the entire population came out to the well to meet Him.<sup>21</sup>

Life-changing well encounters still occur today. The prophet Isaiah exclaimed, "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation."<sup>22</sup> When we place our faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord and receive Him into our hearts in the person of the Holy Spirit, we also are receiving through Him the well of living water Jesus described to the Samaritan woman. A spring wells up in us, bringing joy, peace, love, hope, and what I would describe as a vibrancy to life itself.

The well can also symbolize a place to meet with other followers of Jesus, where God does significant things in our lives. It's striking to me that my parents met each other at the "well" of a prayer meeting. My husband's parents met at the "well" of a church service. I met my husband at the "well" of a Fellowship of Christian Athletes meeting. My two daughters also each met their husbands at the "well" of FCA.

Just as Abraham's servant knew that the best way to find Isaac's bride was to be where the women gathered, if we want to experience life-giving relationships with those who will help us love Jesus more fully and trust Him more completely, we need to put ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren in a place where we can meet other followers of Jesus, such as at a Bible study, church, Christian youth group, or fellowship meetings. This is true not only in our quest for trustworthy, lifelong friends but also in the search for a godly spouse.

#### THE PRAYER

As he waited at the well after his long journey, the servant prayed with great humility and expectancy: "O LORD, God of my master Abraham, give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. May it be that when I say to a girl, 'Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too'—let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master."<sup>23</sup>

The servant's request was somewhat unreasonable. Many young women who came to draw water would probably have given a drink to a hot, dusty,



thirsty traveler if he asked. But it would have been almost beyond imagination for anyone to offer to water his camels also, unless God intervened and moved her heart to do so.

The spring of water on the outskirts of Nahor most likely was located within a well that was accessed by a circular stairway. Whoever watered the camels would have to walk down the steps, fill the bucket with water, walk back up the steps, pour it into the watering trough, turn around, go back down the steps, fill the bucket, go back up the steps, pour it out—again and again and again. Camels can drink up to thirty gallons of water each. The servant was praying for a girl who would be willing not only to get the water she needed for herself but also to spend at least an hour of hard work getting water for his ten camels!

Before the servant had even finished praying, God answered. A beautiful young woman caught his eye. He “hurried to meet her and said, ‘Please give me a little water from your jar.’”<sup>24</sup> Then she offered, “I’ll draw water for your camels too, until they have finished drinking.”<sup>25</sup> What an amazing response! Surely God Himself had moved her to make such an offer.

When finally the last camel had satisfied its thirst, the servant took out a gold ring and heavy gold bracelets to give the young woman in appreciation for what she had done. He knew the time had come to take the next

step, so he inquired, “Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room in your father’s house for us to spend the night?”<sup>26</sup> He knew it wasn’t enough to find a phenomenally beautiful, hardworking girl for Isaac. She also needed to be from a God-fearing family.

Rebekah’s straightforward yet astounding response confirmed the answer to his prayer: “I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son that Milcah bore to Nahor.”<sup>27</sup> Nahor was Abraham’s brother! This girl who had offered him a drink, then watered all his camels, was from the very family to which his master Abraham had directed him! There was no doubt. This was the girl he had come to find.

#### THE PRAISE

The servant must have fallen to the ground in amazement and awe and unrestrained worship. “Praise be to the LORD, the God of my master Abraham,” he declared, “who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to my master. As for me, the LORD has led me on the journey to the house of my master’s relatives.”<sup>28</sup>

When the servant finished praising God and rose from the ground, he discovered that Rebekah had disappeared! But he didn’t frantically search for her. He simply waited, knowing that if God had brought her to him once, God could bring her to him again. He didn’t have to wait long.

Rebekah had run back home to tell her family about a remarkable man who had given her some spectacular and valuable jewelry. When her brother, Laban, saw the expensive gifts, his eyes must have lit up. As we know from later encounters, he was a conniving, shrewd man. He “hurried out to the man at the spring” and found the servant “standing by the camels near the spring,” obviously waiting patiently for the next step in God’s plan to unfold.<sup>29</sup>

As he greeted the servant, Laban gushed, “Come, you who are blessed by the LORD. . . . Why are you standing out here? I have prepared the house and a place for the camels.”<sup>30</sup> Abraham’s servant accepted the gracious offer of hospitality and followed Laban to the house. The camels were unloaded and fed, a bath was prepared for the servant and for the men who had traveled with him, and refreshments were presented. Through it all, the servant patiently waited to tell his story. But he didn’t wait too long.

### THE PRIORITY

When the food was set before him, he resisted: “I will not eat until I have told you what I have to say.”<sup>31</sup> As he recounted his story, the servant didn’t focus on himself. First he spoke of the greatness of Abraham, the father: “The LORD has blessed my master abundantly, and he has become wealthy. He has given him sheep

and cattle, silver and gold, menservants and maidservants, and camels and donkeys.”<sup>32</sup> Then he spoke of Isaac as the only beloved son of the father, to whom Abraham had promised everything he owned.<sup>33</sup> The servant described Abraham and Isaac in such glowing terms that although they weren’t physically present, those listening must have been irresistibly drawn to them.

With Rebekah and her family hanging on every word, the servant explained how Abraham had entrusted him with the task of finding a bride for Isaac, declaring, “You must not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites . . . but go to my father’s family and to my own clan, and get a wife for my son.”<sup>34</sup> As the servant recalled Abraham’s words, the tone of his voice must have conveyed the seriousness with which he had accepted the responsibility for this overwhelming task.

I wonder if his face broke into a warm smile at the memory of Abraham’s encouraging words of faith that had given birth to genuine expectancy in his heart: “The LORD, before whom I have walked, will send his angel with you and make your journey a success.”<sup>35</sup> Rebekah’s family must have noticed the sparkle of excitement in his eyes as he began to unfold for them his side of the meeting at the well. He described how he had come to the spring, how he had prayed specifically

for God to give him success by leading him to the bride for Isaac, how even before he had finished praying, he had looked up and seen Rebekah! His admiring gaze must have turned to her as he related their interaction and how she had become the dramatic answer to his prayer.

### THE PRESENTATION

With bold assurance, the servant stated that he knew God had led him “on the right road to get the granddaughter of my master’s brother for his son.”<sup>36</sup> Everyone who had gathered around to listen was convinced of the servant’s certainty that Rebekah was God’s choice of a bride for Isaac. The servant concluded by presenting the family with a choice: “If you will show kindness and faithfulness to my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so I may know which way to turn.”<sup>37</sup>

Laban, Rebekah’s brother, and Bethuel, her father, spoke in total unity. “This is from the LORD,” they said. “Here is Rebekah; take her and go, and let her become the wife of your master’s son, as the LORD has directed.”<sup>38</sup>

Overcome once again with gratitude to God, the servant immediately “bowed down to the ground before the LORD.”<sup>39</sup> His words had been received; his mission had been understood; the offer had been accepted. He had no words to express how he felt, only

the intensely meaningful and poignant gesture of humble worship.

### **The Success of the Search**

The servant then stepped over to the big, heavy packs he had brought such a long way, opened them up, and distributed gifts of sparkling jewels and gleaming gold and silver necklaces, bracelets, and rings, along with shimmering silks, fine linen clothing, and other costly treasures for Rebekah and her family. So many extravagant gifts! And such a variety! The gifts indicated that Abraham was wealthier than their wildest dreams. Surely the abundance and the extravagance of these treasures confirmed the decision Laban and Bethuel had made for Rebekah to become Isaac's bride.

But the wise servant hadn't yet heard from Rebekah. She hadn't indicated her choice. I wonder if the display of gifts was partially his way of persuading her, without pressure. He was giving her just a glimpse of what would one day be hers if she chose to be Isaac's bride.

#### **THE SUCCESS DEPENDS ON OUR CHOICE**

The next morning Laban suggested the servant's return journey be delayed for ten days so that Rebekah could have more time at home. The wise servant insisted, "Do



not detain me, now that the LORD has granted success to my journey. Send me on my way so I may go to my master.”<sup>40</sup> He knew the decision needed to be made at that moment, then promptly acted on. Any postponement would only make room for indecision on Rebekah’s part, as well as provide opportunity for her brother and father to reconsider their decision to let her go.

“They called Rebekah and asked her, ‘Will you go with this man?’”<sup>41</sup> Rebekah had to choose for herself. In fact, it was the only way she could become Isaac’s bride. The servant would never have accepted a forced arrangement. He wanted her to come with him and choose life with Isaac of her own free will.

Rebekah replied, “I will go.”<sup>42</sup>

#### THE SUCCESS DEPENDS ON OUR COMMITMENT

Once Rebekah made the decision, her family blessed her. “Then Rebekah and her maids got ready and mounted their camels and went back with the man. So the servant took Rebekah and left.”<sup>43</sup> The servant had to transport Rebekah back over the difficult and dangerous route to Canaan. It was his responsibility to protect her and guard her and keep her and deliver her safely to Isaac. It was Rebekah’s responsibility to live out her commitment to be Isaac’s bride as she allowed the servant to lead her step by step. Mile by mile. Day after day. Week after week.

As monotonous as the desert view likely was, the mounting anticipation must have been almost palpable. Without a doubt, Rebekah was consumed with thoughts of Isaac.

The servant must have thoroughly enjoyed talking to the beautiful young woman about the greatness of the father and the glory of the son. He must have told Rebekah about Isaac's miraculous conception and birth.<sup>44</sup> He may have told her about Ishmael's jealousy of Isaac, his voice dropping as he described the painful scene of Ishmael's removal from the home.<sup>45</sup> And did he tell her about Mount Moriah, where Isaac was spared death at the last moment because God had said he would provide a lamb to die on the altar in his place?<sup>46</sup>

As Rebekah learned more and more about Isaac, she must have fallen in love with him before she even saw him. She must have longed for him and begun to look for him, especially as she knew her journey was coming to an end and she was drawing near to the place where he was.

As I journey through life on my way to the Father's house, the Holy Spirit, who is the Holy Servant, is teaching me about the Father's Son.<sup>47</sup> He has told me . . .

. . . about His miraculous conception and birth.<sup>48</sup>

. . . about His life on earth.<sup>49</sup>

. . . about His sacrifice on the cross when the Father provided His own Son as the Lamb.<sup>50</sup>

. . . about His resurrection.<sup>51</sup>

. . . about His ascension into Heaven.<sup>52</sup>

I have learned that He is the Father's sole heir<sup>53</sup> and that, as His bride, I will share in His wealth and power and glory.<sup>54</sup> The Holy Spirit has shown me a vast variety of gifts from which He's carefully selected specific ones to give me in the name of the Son.<sup>55</sup> I have learned that the Son is seated at the Father's right hand, thinking of me and praying for me right now.<sup>56</sup> And I have been told that He is looking for me! That one day I will look up and see Him coming to receive me to Himself so that I can live with Him in His heavenly Home forever.<sup>57</sup> It's no wonder that even though I have yet to see Him visibly, I already love Him! I believe in Him. And I'm filled with inexpressible and glorious joy at the very thought of Him.<sup>58</sup>

As my journey draws to an end—whether because I'm growing older or because the time for His return is near—my expectation of seeing Jesus is intensifying. I long to see the expression on His face when He sees me . . . and my children and grandchildren. I long to hear the sound of His voice speaking my name. And I long to feel His touch. My anticipation of being physically in His presence is at times almost a tangible ache.

In a similar way, Rebekah's anticipation must have

reached a crescendo. After weeks of travel, on an evening that probably looked like many previous ones, her attention was caught by movement. Instinctively, she knew. It was Isaac. He was coming for her! This encounter was the climax of her entire journey. She hastily slipped off the camel; then just to make sure, she asked the servant, "Who is that man in the field coming to meet us?"<sup>59</sup> Her hope was confirmed when he answered, "He is my master."<sup>60</sup>

#### THE SUCCESS DEPENDS ON OUR CONSTANCY

I wonder if it suddenly occurred to Rebekah that while she had been learning all about Isaac, he knew nothing about her. I wonder if she was in love with him but feared he wouldn't love her. Would she be pleasing in his eyes? Would she be what he was looking for and longing for? Would she be all he expected her to be? She knew Isaac was the father's sole heir. As his bride, she would share in all that was his. She was walking toward one who would transform her life with vast wealth and power and position. But would their marriage be only an official arrangement? Or would their relationship be one of genuine love? She seemed overcome with shyness, so she took her veil and covered herself.<sup>61</sup>

Before long, Isaac's response would lay all Rebekah's fears to rest. He had gone out into the field to

meditate, but I wonder if he had been watching for her too. After forty years of singleness, his mind must have been filled with thoughts of his bride, who she would be and what she would be like. As she drew near, he, too, must have felt his heart skip a beat! Since she was veiled, all he would have been able to see was a female form swathed in the fine linen clothing his father had provided for her. Would he be pleased? Or would he be disappointed?

There must have been introductions then, as Isaac and Rebekah gazed on each other for the first time and “the servant told Isaac all he had done.”<sup>62</sup> How thrilled the servant must have been to present the bride to Abraham’s son and explain all that God had orchestrated to make this moment possible. She was exactly the bride the father had sought for his son. But would she be what Isaac wanted? The Bible leaves no room for doubt: “Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her.”<sup>63</sup>

The Bible doesn’t tell us what Abraham thought about his new daughter-in-law. But I know. Without any doubt, he loved her because she loved his son.

If you ever wonder what the heavenly Father thinks about you, just remember this: Love His Son, and you can be absolutely reassured that the Father loves you.<sup>64</sup>

Not only is Abraham’s parental leadership exem-

plary, but it also beautifully parallels the heavenly Father's desire to secure a bride for His Son. Just as Abraham sent his servant to look for a godly match, God the Father sends His Spirit into the world to find a fitting bride for His Son. But the choice of whether or not to "go with this man" is ours. Once we decide to be the one the Father seeks, we must follow through with a commitment that results not in a 450-mile trip but in a lifelong journey of faith. And every step of the way, the Father's Servant, the Holy Spirit, will guide, protect, instruct, and strengthen us until the glorious day when He presents us to the Son as the one the Father has chosen to be His bride.

So while you and I can rest assured of the heavenly Father's love for us, will we be a bride that is pleasing to His Son? We don't have to guess. We don't have to live in the fear that He might be disappointed in us. The Bible gives us enough information to know with certainty whether we will be pleasing to Him or not. While no one is perfect, it's possible for saved sinners to pursue lives of utter devotion, abandoned to the One who loves us and gave Himself for us—lives that reflect the beauty of His character in ways that are obvious to those around us.

In the following pages, Rachel-Ruth explores twenty-one qualities we find in Rebekah, each of which should be present in anyone who seeks to be

pleasing to the Son. Please join us in this twenty-one-day challenge as we examine ourselves in preparation for meeting Jesus face-to-face. It's time to move our faith from salvation to transformation in order to be a bride who "has made herself ready."<sup>65</sup>

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anne Graham". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and a stylized "G".

## DAY 1



### A Family Member

Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, who was the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor.

—Genesis 24:15

**W**HEN ABRAHAM INSTRUCTED HIS FAITHFUL SERVANT to find a bride for his beloved son Isaac, he had only one criterion: Make sure you find a young woman who is in the family. His exact words were “Go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac.”<sup>1</sup> He didn’t say to his servant, “Travel all the lands in every kingdom, and find Isaac a wife that is drop-



dead gorgeous, wealthy, smart, athletic, the life of the party, and a really good cook!” While surely he would have wanted his son’s bride to exhibit the qualities we’ve highlighted in this volume, the success of this mission was based first on her being a member of Abraham’s extended family. Why was that so important?

God had promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants forever. However, during the time of Abraham, the land was occupied by Canaanites, a broad term used to describe ten tribes that lived in the land. The Canaanites were wicked people that worshipped idols, sacrificed children, and glorified every kind of sexual perversion, to name just a few of their sinful patterns. Abraham had the wisdom to know that Isaac needed a godly wife and that such a woman wouldn’t be found among the pagan tribes surrounding them. So he sent his servant on a long trek back to Abraham’s hometown of Haran, where his brother’s family still lived.

Being a mother of three daughters, two of whom are at the age where they could meet their future spouses, I resonate with Abraham’s concern. As you can imagine, each of my daughters has a very different vision of the type of man she hopes to one day marry. There has been much discussion and prayer in our house over what the man of their dreams will be like and look like. But the one thing I always say with absolute conviction is “Make sure he is in God’s family!”

The primary qualification is that he has to love Jesus with all his heart and be surrendered to the Lord and His will for his life.

Beauty fades; financial prosperity can come and go; athletic records will be broken by the next star. But a marriage centered on a shared love for Jesus will endure whatever life may throw at you. So when one of my daughters calls to tell me she is going on a date, the first thing I ask is if he is a believer. In other words, Is he in God's family?

As I consider what it means to be in the family, I can't help but think of my dad, Danny Lotz. As a teenager, he was an aggressive, six-foot-seven basketball player who started all four years on the basketball team at Northport High School on Long Island, New York, and played pickup basketball in Harlem every chance he got. All that hard work paid off when he received a full basketball scholarship to the University of North Carolina. Tar Heel country! While playing under Coach Frank McGuire, my dad and his team had an undefeated season, winning the 1957 national championship in triple overtime against Kansas.

I obviously wasn't alive at that time, but growing up, I saw the many perks my dad enjoyed from being a part of the Tar Heel's basketball family: season tickets to athletic events, membership in the lettermen's club, camaraderie with all the former and current players

and coaches, a fiftieth anniversary ring ceremony honoring their dream championship season, photos of their team on display in the Dean Dome, an entire museum dedicated to UNC basketball, and the list goes on. Wherever legendary UNC coach Dean Smith was, if he saw my dad, he would stop everything to go talk with him. Because when you are part of UNC basketball, you are part of an exclusive family! When long-time head coach Roy Williams announced his retirement in 2021, many former UNC players made it clear that the school needed to hire a new coach within “the family.” They did!

As exclusive as the UNC basketball family is, or Abraham’s family was, God’s family is even more exclusive. Even so, anyone is welcome to join! It doesn’t matter what you look like—your height, your weight, your skin color. It doesn’t matter how many academic degrees you have or don’t have, how many championships you’ve won or lost, how much money is in your bank account or if you’re overdrawn, or whether the latest fashions are hanging in your closet or you can’t remember when you had new clothes. It doesn’t matter how many times you’ve helped an old lady across the street, stopped along the road to fix someone’s tire, cooked a meal for a sick friend, or given time or money to a homeless shelter. None of these things matter, because it’s not about good works or good looks. It’s about your relationship with the Father.

When the trumpet sounds and the clouds part and Jesus Himself descends, the only people that will be taken up to meet Him in the air and forever live in His house are those who are members of His family! That is the picture God was painting when He had Abraham seek a bride for his son Isaac, mirroring His own search for a bride suitable for His Son.

Jesus isn't the kind of princely bridegroom you read about in novels or see in movies, the kind that slays the dragon or fights off a villain or two to win the heart of the lovely princess. Our Bridegroom—the Son of God—came to this earth in human form, humbled Himself to leave glorious Heaven and be born in a stable, grew up, compassionately healed the sick, set free the demon possessed, raised the dead, led the sinner out of the path of destruction, and taught the hardest of hearts about the love of His Father. He was then rejected by His own people.<sup>2</sup> They spit at Him, mocked Him, hurled insults at Him, whipped Him, beat Him, pulled out His beard, nailed Him to a cross, and speared His side. But Jesus, our Bridegroom, didn't storm off; He didn't yell back; He didn't command them all to drop dead; He didn't pour out His wrath on humanity right then and there. Instead, our Prince, our Bridegroom, received all the wrath and condemnation we deserved. He took our sins on Himself and bore the humiliation of the Cross so that we could be set free and become His bride!

Oh, how can we be deserving of such a gift, such a Bridegroom? That's just it: We aren't worthy in ourselves. But this is the greatest news anyone can ever tell you: Jesus did all the work on the cross, all that was necessary for us to receive forgiveness of sins—past, present, and future. To be in God's exclusive family, all we have to do is believe and humbly accept His gift! Once we do receive this through faith in Jesus, “to those who [have] believed in his name, he [gives] the right to become children of God.”<sup>3</sup>


Before the dear servant set out on his journey, he asked Abraham what he should do if the woman he chose as the bride wasn't willing to come back to Canaan and marry Isaac. Abraham responded by saying that the servant would then be released from the promise he'd made to find a bride for Isaac.<sup>4</sup> In other words, he shouldn't force her to come with him. The servant could choose a wife for Isaac, but then the potential bride would also have to willingly choose to come to Isaac's home and be part of his family.

Abraham's servant is like the Holy Spirit, coming to you with the most amazing offer imaginable. He offers you salvation in the name of Jesus! Will you accept? He won't force you. You have free will to choose. Don't delay; accept His free gift of salvation today! Make sure you are part of God's family.



## DAY 1 CHALLENGE

If you don't remember a time when you prayed a prayer like the one below, how do you know you are in God's family? So on this first day, if you aren't sure, pray this prayer now. Don't wait another second! The Bridegroom is at the door. He's coming in the blink of an eye. Make sure He's coming for you!



*Jesus, I believe! I want to be a member of Your Father's family!*

*I believe that You died on the cross to forgive me of my sins and cleanse me. I believe that You rose from the dead and now offer me eternal life with You and that one day You will return as my Bridegroom and receive me into Your kingdom in Heaven. I confess to You that I have done wrong things, and I'm sorry. I'm willing to turn away from them. I'm asking that You come into my life today. I receive the eternal life You offer. Be my Savior, the Forgiver of all my sins, the Lord of my life, and my soon-coming Bridegroom!*

*Thank You, Jesus!*

*Amen.*

If you have the blessed assurance that God is your Father because you have trusted Jesus as your Savior and Lord, then take a moment now to thank Him for your place in His family.

*Father God,*

*Thank You for the confidence I have that I have met the most important criterion for being chosen as a bride for Your Son, Jesus. Not because of anything I am or have done but simply because I have placed all my trust in Him, I know I'm a member of Your family. Now I pray You will use the following twenty days of challenges to make me more pleasing to You in every way.*

*For the sake of the Bridegroom,  
And in His name—Jesus,  
Amen.*

## DAY 2



### Faithful in the Day-to-Day

Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder.

—Genesis 24:15

**H**AVE YOU EVER ENVISIONED THAT GLORIOUS DAY WHEN Jesus will appear? Have you wondered about what He will find you doing—or possibly catch you doing? The Bible says that He will come suddenly, like a thief in the night.<sup>1</sup> There will be no five-minute warning. You won't be able to call a time-out to stop the argument you're in the middle of, break off your adulterous affair, get sober after you've had too much to drink, change the conversation at your gossipy lun-



cheon, put your phone down and open the Bible, shift from angry words to joyful praise in traffic, or stay late and help your co-worker instead of rushing home after work.

His coming will be swift. What will He find you doing? My grandmother, whom we called Tai Tai, hung over her kitchen sink a sign that said “Divine Service Will Be Conducted Here Three Times Daily.” It was a continual reminder that even mundane, everyday chores should be done as unto the Lord. The Bible confirms that cooking and cooking pots, traveling and transportation, as well as other mundane items for day-to-day activities will one day have “Holy to the Lord” inscribed on them.<sup>2</sup> So when I’m in the middle of cooking another dinner or driving to one more practice or answering a never-ending stream of emails, I need to take a deep breath and remember that everything I do should be done as unto Him. For His glory.

As much as we might like to hide away and wait for His return, we can’t. We must continue to faithfully live for Jesus in the everyday, including life’s not-so-glamorous tasks. However, in the middle of those menial tasks, we can have an incredible encounter with God.

When the servant first spotted Rebekah, in the early evening, she was carrying a jar on her shoulder to collect water from the well. She was busy about her

daily responsibilities. She wasn't gossiping with friends or taking a nap or binge-watching Netflix. Never would she have dreamed that a servant of a very wealthy man was nearby, seeking a bride for his princely son, but because she was faithful to carry out her responsibilities for that day, she was noticed and approached by Abraham's servant.

Retrieving water in a jar seems like a job that would make you feel unnoticed or less than someone else. It seems like a task to hand off to others. I've certainly tried to do that with some of my tasks a time or two! But the opposite was true for Rebekah. She was noticed *because* she was faithfully doing her work, indicated by a water jar on her shoulder, even after a long day.

My dad's youngest brother, Uncle Denton, told me once that so much of the Christian's walk is just being faithful in the everyday ho-hum. And God can meet you in that daily ho-hum, not just at the Rapture.

We see several such encounters with God in Scripture. Moses encountered God when he was on the far side of the desert, tending his father-in-law's sheep. God spoke to him through a burning bush and called him to return to Egypt, where God would use him to set His people free from slavery.<sup>3</sup> Gideon encountered God while threshing wheat. He was a fearful, unconfident man, yet God called him "mighty warrior" and

sent him to fight the Midianites and save Israel.<sup>4</sup> Peter encountered the Lord while fishing on a boat. Jesus called him to be a disciple and eventually to open the door for the gospel to go to the Gentiles.<sup>5</sup> The woman at the well encountered Jesus while filling her jar with water. Jesus, the Living Water, completely changed her life in one conversation!<sup>6</sup> Mary and Martha opened their home and served a meal to others and had a front row seat to Jesus's ministry.<sup>7</sup>

Each of these men and women was faithfully carrying out their day-to-day tasks when they encountered God in a personal, life-changing way.

Could that be you? Are you, like them, faithfully working day in and day out? Whether you are a dentist drilling teeth, a janitor scrubbing toilets, a mom in the car-pool line waiting to pick up kids, a dad helping your son with math homework, an administrative assistant on the twenty-second floor of an urban high-rise, a butcher in the back of a tiny grocery store, a dog walker, a CEO in a meeting, or a cashier at a checkout line—whatever work the Lord has you doing—are you faithful, no matter how monotonous the work? God is watching you go the extra mile on a certain project. He sees that you don't cut corners to finish early, even though others do. He sees you completing an assignment instead of procrastinating. He even watches you stay up late to do the dishes, start a load of laundry,

pack your kids' lunches. He sees you wake up early to pray and study the Bible before you leave for a busy day at work. God is watching, even when you think no one else sees or cares! God also knows just when to step in with a word of encouragement for you, give you clear leading toward a new direction, or open a door of opportunity!

In 2 Kings 3, we find a great example. King Joram of Israel was a wicked king, although not as wicked as his parents, King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. Knowing the Moabites were about to attack, King Joram recruited King Jehoshaphat of Judah, along with the king of Edom, to join him in fighting the Moabites. Things didn't go so well. After seven days of chasing the Moabites, the armies ran out of water. King Joram threw a tantrum. Godly King Jehoshaphat, by contrast, suggested they inquire of the Lord through the prophet Elisha. The prophet's response cracks me up. He told Joram that he wouldn't have looked at him or even noticed him, but because Jehoshaphat was present, he would call on the Lord for them!

God's solution to their thirst: Have the soldiers dig ditches! They were to spend all night filling the valley with ditches. Imagine how they must have been tempted to grumble. "Why do we have to dig ditches? Do we have to dig that many ditches? Surely He didn't mean the whole valley. We can probably just dig a cou-


ple little holes. What's the big deal?" But they obeyed and faithfully dug what I assume were hundreds of ditches in the valley without cutting corners. The next morning God supernaturally filled that dry valley with water for the soldiers and the livestock—without one raindrop! God took care of them, but He wanted to see that they would faithfully carry out the task He assigned.

All the signs of the times suggest we don't have a whole lot of time left until Jesus returns. What will He find you doing? What task has He assigned to you that you feel isn't very significant? Your work? Your chores at home? Are you stuck in a house caring for a sick loved one instead of out doing "real work"? Whatever it may be, God is watching! Wouldn't it be wonderful to hear Him exclaim, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things"?<sup>8</sup> So . . . be faithful in the day-to-day!



## DAY 2 CHALLENGE

What are your daily responsibilities? Examine your attitude toward them. Are you complaining about the demands of life, or are you grateful for the opportunity to serve faithfully with all your strength? King Solomon, the wisest man who has ever lived other than Jesus, challenged the reader of his memoirs, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.”<sup>9</sup> On this second day, as you prepare to see Jesus face-to-face, commit to ensuring that He will find you faithfully doing the work He has called you to do—with all your heart.



*Lord of my days,*

*I worship You as the carpenter in Nazareth,  
fulfilling orders for customers, doing the bidding  
of Joseph. I am sorry when I complain about the  
day-to-day. Help me see You in my responsibilities,  
whether they are small or overwhelming.  
Lift up my eyes to see that even while I am “dig-  
ging ditches,” I can have an incredible encounter  
with You. In that split second of the Rapture,  
when the sky unfolds and You return for me and  
I see You face-to-face, I want to be found faithful!*

*For the sake of the Bridegroom,  
And in His name—Jesus,  
Amen.*

## DAY 3



## Beautiful . . . on the Inside

The girl was very beautiful.

—Genesis 24:16

SINCE I WAS A YOUNG GIRL, I'VE STRUGGLED WITH insecurity about my appearance, never feeling like I quite measured up. I've been at war with my curly hair for as long as I can remember. On top of that, I grew to my full height of five feet eleven in eighth grade. I towered over everyone, which was great on the basketball court but not so great in the halls at school, where everyone else seemed half my height! To this day, I have to remind myself that so-called perfect hair and ideal height aren't what matter in life.

When it comes to true beauty, what really matters is the heart. Sadly, outward beauty seems an obsession for most people. Everyone wants to look a certain way, so they do whatever it takes and pay however much it costs in the hope of achieving that perfect look. As women, we can move quickly from highlights to concealers and eye creams, to teeth whiteners, serums, fake lashes, self-tanners, diets, exercise, fashion, and even surgeries. While women seem more obvious in their obsession with outward appearance, men also can get caught up in their appearance, using teeth whiteners, self-tanners, bodybuilding exercises, and trendy hairstyles and clothes—all to appear successful or earn that compliment or capture the perfect selfie, TikTok, or Instagram post!

With four women in our house, you can imagine how much time, energy, and money are spent on hair and makeup! I would be lying if I said I didn't notice or lament the signs of aging that seem to be creeping up on me. But what does it really matter? I have to keep reminding myself that when we stand before God, He won't be looking to determine if I am pretty enough or if you are handsome enough to come into His heavenly Home. He won't question if we looked sharp while we shared the gospel down on earth. He won't ask to see how many likes we got on a certain vacation post. Beauty that counts for eternity is on the inside.



Abraham's servant noticed that Rebekah was beautiful—an outward characteristic—but what convinced him she was Isaac's future bride was her character.

Perhaps you've encountered a physically beautiful person, only to find out that they have bad manners, a filthy mouth, a huge ego, a haughty heart, or are just plain mean. The allure of their beauty quickly fades with the revelation of their character. Proverbs 31:30–31 says, “Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.”

We need to be men and women of character so that, even in the toughest circumstances, in the most menial jobs, when we face life's hardest curveballs, our beauty goes deeper than the surface. Paul described this beauty as “the fruit of the Spirit” . . . the evidence of a Christlike life. It's love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.<sup>1</sup> As our story continues, we will see that it was not just outer beauty but inner beauty that Rebekah had.

The enemy of our souls has created such an overpowering obsession with outer beauty in our culture that people don't seem to be able to handle the emotional turmoil of not aligning with the world's stan-

dards of beauty. This kind of pressure leads many into a state of depression or even hopelessness. God never intended for our focus to be on the outer, but it is a war tactic of the Enemy to distract us from what really counts—Christlike character.

But the Enemy's strategy isn't a new one. In 1 Samuel 16, the prophet Samuel went looking for the man God had chosen to be the future king of Israel. God led him to the family of Jesse in Bethlehem, where he met Jesse's first son, Eliab. He must have been a very handsome warrior, because Samuel was immediately impressed by his looks and assumed that he must be God's anointed. But the Lord corrected Samuel and said, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."<sup>2</sup> So Jesse had seven of his sons pass in front of Samuel. None of them were God's chosen king. When the prophet asked if Jesse had any other sons, he learned that the youngest son was out tending the sheep. David was then brought before Samuel, and the Lord told Samuel, "Rise and anoint him; he is the one."<sup>3</sup> Even though Scripture says that David was "ruddy, with a fine appearance and handsome features,"<sup>4</sup> what singled him out as God's chosen future king of Israel was his heart.

When one of my daughters was in elementary school, a classmate sent out invitations to her birthday party. On the day of the event, I dropped my daughter off at the girl's house. When I returned to pick her up, she got into the car in tears. She told me that one student in her class—a little girl with a disability—hadn't been invited. I don't know what reasoning lay behind the cruelty of not inviting the child, but my daughter and I were grieved at what the exclusion suggested. What are we teaching our children, even at a young age? The way someone looks—the color of their skin, their clothing, their physical inabilities, and other outward characteristics—should never determine how we treat them.


Beauty doesn't last, and it doesn't matter in the long run, unless you just want to be remembered as pretty. What a shallow life that would be! Consider the greats in the Bible. We don't know what most of them looked like, but we read about their character and godliness, and it's literally life changing! Paul worshipping God in a prison cell;<sup>5</sup> John getting a fresh vision of Jesus while in exile;<sup>6</sup> Stephen having peace on his face while being stoned to death;<sup>7</sup> Jeremiah being thrown into a pit for his unyielding stand for the Lord;<sup>8</sup> Hosea being faithful to a wife who was continually unfaithful to him.<sup>9</sup> Like Samuel, maybe you and I need to refocus on inner beauty—the beauty of a Christlike character, which draws people to us and ultimately to Jesus.

When we stand before God, we won't be digging for our new lipstick or fixing our hair or polishing our Jordans or flexing our biceps to impress God. Our character will be what is on full display. Make it a priority to be beautiful on the inside.



### DAY 3 CHALLENGE

Pause now and consider: How much time do you spend on your outward appearance compared with the time you spend in daily prayer and Bible reading? Do you need to make an adjustment? On this third day, if it's your goal to be truly beautiful in God's eyes, make it a priority to develop your character by spending time with Him, then live out your faith so that others can see Him reflected in you.



*Fairest Lord Jesus,*

*How could I ever desire anything other than to be a reflection of You? So polish me using whatever means You choose . . . stress or suffering . . . problems or persecution . . . obstacles or opportunities . . . hard work or hard times. I'm Yours to mold into a person who is beautiful in Your eyes.*

*For the sake of the Bridegroom,  
And in His name—Jesus,  
Amen.*

## DAY 4



## Purified

The girl was very beautiful, a virgin; no man had ever lain with her.

—Genesis 24:16

**R**ECENTLY MY YOUNGEST DAUGHTER, RIGGIN, WAS having lunch with a group of other fifteen-year-old girls when some of the girls began telling stories of their sexual encounters. Riggan was disturbed by the direction of the conversation and knew that she needed to speak up. She began telling them about purity and how she is going to save sex for marriage. They looked at her, confused. They never got angry with her or laughed at her. Instead, they peppered her with ques-

tions. The girls at the table acted as if they had never heard or thought of that before! In fact, one girl shared that her father told her that in high school she would do a lot of “things,” which he said was fine as long as she didn’t take any pills. *That breaks my heart!* Have we fallen so far that we aren’t teaching our children about God’s basic principles for life?

After lunch, one of the girls came up to Riggin and thanked her for telling them about purity. She truly seemed appreciative, but their conversation underscored the unfortunate reality that purity seems to be a foreign concept to the generations growing up in our world today. Is that because people don’t care about sin? Or perhaps, like Riggin’s friends, they just haven’t heard or thought about it. Have they been taught that the goal of life is happiness, as if there were no right or wrong? The prevailing mentality seems to be just do anything and everything that makes you feel happy. Have sex with whomever, drink as much alcohol as you want, snort/smoke/inject anything that makes you feel good, lie if you think it will be beneficial, look at pornography, gossip, be mean, steal, cheat—you name it. All of this may feel good in the moment, but sin inevitably leaves people feeling dirty, angry, and even hopeless whether or not they admit it. This downward spiral puts them on a course to mask their feelings by doing more of the same or worse. Sin is eating people

alive, and they don't know what to do about it. Many of them don't even know what it is.

Several years ago, one of my girls accidentally left a chocolate candy bar in the pocket of a shirt she placed in the laundry pile. When I pulled the laundry out of the washing machine, chocolate was melted and smeared all over her clothes and everything else that was in the same load of laundry. Like any good procrastinating mom, I threw the whole pile into a trash bag and determined to figure out how to get chocolate out of fifty different fabrics—later. When I finally researched how I could salvage the clothes, I read that a certain brand of dish soap could get rid of chocolate stains. I wet and scrubbed each piece of laundry with water and dish soap, and the stains began to lighten. But despite my best efforts, a yellow stain was left behind on each piece of clothing.

Sin in our lives is like those chocolate stains. It permeates our hearts, spreading a stain that taints our relationships and other aspects of life. We can ignore the sin, put off confessing it, or try to mask it through pills, alcohol, therapy, good deeds, frantic busyness, or many other things. But only Jesus can get the stain of sin out of our hearts. And unlike my dish soap solution, He guarantees that His blood will wash us clean!<sup>1</sup>

We are all sinners. There is no sin that you or I have committed that Jesus doesn't know about. And



there is no sin that He won't forgive. First John 1:8–10 says, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives."

Sexual immorality is especially devastating to the human spirit. I recently listened as a capable, successful young man, who is a friend of my brother, shared his story. He had married a woman who truly loved him. Because of his sinful past, however, he didn't think he deserved her love. So in a bizarre, twisted way, he proved he wasn't worthy by going out and having an adulterous affair. The misery was more than he could take. He ended up confessing his sin to the Lord, then to his wife, both of whom forgave him. Although it had been years since that terrible time, he wept as he recounted his story. It was evident the scars of sin were still painful.

When you and I give our lives to Jesus and become part of God's family, we are forgiven of every sin we have ever committed or will ever commit. Yet as Jesus followers, we must daily come to the Lord and confess to Him whatever sins we have committed that day so we can maintain our close relationship with Him. Sin puts distance between the Lord and us, a distance that


we sometimes feel as a spiritual coldness or deadness or misery,<sup>2</sup> a lack of love for Him,<sup>3</sup> or prayers that aren't answered.<sup>4</sup>

My mom always taught me to keep short accounts with the Lord. God wants us to tell Him what we did, even though He already knows. He purifies us when we acknowledge our sin before Him, admit we were wrong, humbly and truthfully tell Him we are sorry for it, and stop that sinful behavior. He cleanses us of guilt and shame, leaving us washed clean on the inside. And it feels so good to be purified!



## DAY 4 CHALLENGE

It's time for an internal scrubbing! On this fourth day, spend time cleaning up. Don't worry about what the Lord will think of your confession. He already knows about your sin, so just tell Him. He won't blame you for it. Jesus actually shed His blood in order to cleanse you and remove the stain of guilt. The apostle Paul encouraged the Corinthians, "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."<sup>5</sup> So talk to the Lord about your sin, confess it, stop indulging in whatever it is at present, and ask Him to heal your memories of the past. Ask Him to wash you on the inside—then enjoy being clean! And know that on the day when He appears and you see Him face-to-face, He will make everything new, erasing even the memories of those sins!<sup>6</sup>



Holy Lord,

*You are high and lifted up. You live forever.  
Your very name is Holy.*

*I acknowledge that I am not. I am a sinner.  
Yet You have promised that You will live with  
those who are contrite and lowly in spirit, to re-  
vive our hearts.<sup>7</sup> I am so sorry for all the wrong  
things I have done and am currently doing. I  
am sorry for all the wrong things I have said. I  
confess to You my \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank).  
I am willing to turn away from my sin. I choose  
to put effort into being found "spotless, blame-  
less and at peace" with You when I see You face-  
to-face.<sup>8</sup> Help me! "Let me hear joy and  
gladness. . . . Restore to me the joy of your sal-  
vation."<sup>9</sup> Thank You for Your blood, which  
cleanses me from every sin, large and small, past  
and present.<sup>10</sup>*

*For the sake of the Bridegroom,  
And in His name—Jesus,  
Amen.*

## DAY 5



### Spiritually Filled

She went down to the spring, filled her jar and came up again.

—Genesis 24:16

**M**OST OF US HAVE THE LUXURY OF FILLING A GLASS with water at the turn of a knob or the push of a button. But Rebekah and the people of her day had to retrieve their water from a well or a stream—a time-consuming and muscle-straining daily chore, usually reserved for women. After carrying a large empty jar on her head or shoulder to wherever the well was located, a woman would lower the jar into the well with a rope, then pull the full—and heavy—jar to the top of the

well and carry the vessel back to her home for cooking, cleaning, and washing. Other wells were accessed by winding steps that descended into a recessed pool. A woman would walk down to dip her jar in the water, then walk back up the steps, lugging her heavy water-filled container.

While we don't know which type of well Rebekah accessed, either one would have required enormous effort in order for her to retrieve water. But for her to leave her family without water, for even a single day, would have been unthinkable. God has made water essential to human survival.

When my middle daughter, Sophia, was twenty months old, my husband, my two daughters (my youngest daughter had yet to be born), and I all got sick with the norovirus within thirty minutes of one another. It was quite a doozy. Neither of my girls was able to make it to the bathroom fast enough, so you can imagine. I've never done so much laundry in my life. We recovered after a week, but then Sophia caught it again. Unable to hold anything down, she became extremely weak and severely dehydrated. I called the nurse multiple times and was given the usual protocol: Wait fifteen minutes, and then give her a piece of ice to suck on. This went on for a while, but her precious little body still couldn't keep down the melted ice cube. She was becoming dangerously dehydrated, and

I was starting to panic! I felt helpless in my attempts to get the nurse to understand the seriousness of the situation.

In the middle of my agony, my mom asked if I had read *Daily Light*, a 365-day devotional that everyone in my family reads each morning. Because of our emergency situation, I hadn't read it that day. When I opened it and read the morning's portion, I cried. It's as if God spoke directly to me! He gave me a promise to claim for Sophia: "I, the LORD, keep it, I water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I keep it night and day."<sup>1</sup> I knew right then and there that God was promising me that He would "water" my little girl! The nurse finally was able to get us a room at the hospital, so I raced there in the pouring rain while Sophia lay limp in her car seat. I carried her down the hallway of the hospital to the room, where they made multiple attempts to get an IV into her tiny vein. And then . . . it worked! Fluid began dripping into her body, and she moved, opening her eyes. God saved her little life! With every drop of fluid that went into her small body, He gave me increasing peace.

Just as Sophia needed that IV fluid to live, just as each of us needs water to sustain life, we also need God's Word to replenish us so that we don't dry up. God confirmed the necessity of being spiritually filled when He explained, "As the rain and the snow come

down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth.”<sup>2</sup>

We need to be aware of warning signs that we are spiritually dehydrated or in danger of slipping into that state. I’ve recently been reminded of how vital it is for me to stay filled with God’s life-giving Word. Our family has been under enormous attack from the Enemy over the past year, especially during the past six months—an all-out aggressive assault with the intent to steal, kill, and destroy our faith. After illnesses, heartbreaking news, shattered dreams, intense confrontations, and near-death experiences, we’ve been left almost stunned. I personally had to deal with two rare SCAD (spontaneous coronary artery dissection) heart attacks that almost took my life, only to find out there is a chance I can have another one!

While writing this, I’m still having some chest pain, two months after my heart attacks. Several scares have sent me to the ER and to the doctor’s office. But God has been giving me multiple promises through His Word that I will be okay, that I won’t die from this! Recently I was praying about whether or not to go to the ER because of intense chest pain. God clearly spoke to me through Psalm 40, telling me to wait patiently and stand firm. So I chose to wait and not be



fearful! Instead of going to the ER, I went to bed. When I woke up the next morning, the pain had greatly decreased. I knew God was testing my faith! That same week, as I ate dinner, I started to feel dizzy and my mouth, tongue, and chin started to tingle and grow slightly numb. I thought, *Could this really be happening? Heart problems and now an allergic reaction to some food?* What a week! I felt I was at the end of my rope. So I turned to God's Word. Psalm 46:10 seemed to jump off the page: "Be still, and know that I am God." I chose to sit still, not panic, and trust that God wouldn't allow it to get worse. The numbness and dizziness went away! While writing this, I was seeking God's will on whether or not it would be safe to leave town for the weekend for a meeting. I prayed, and God gave me a verse of confirmation in my devotions: "The LORD will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore."<sup>3</sup> I believe He clearly confirmed to me that I would be safe going on the trip! If I had chosen not to seek Him in each of the above situations, I would have been overtaken by fear.


God's Word fills me up to overflowing with living water: promises, encouragement, direction, and correction! God wants to be intimately involved in my life and yours. So when you face questions and problems and you need wisdom on what to do or what to say or

where to go, turn to God's Word! Not only will it speak to you, but most important, it will keep your focus on Jesus and not your circumstances. Isn't it time you drank deeply of the Living Water?



### DAY 5 CHALLENGE

What words are saturating your heart and mind? Are you filling up on words from the news, social media, movies, friends? Or are you drinking in the Word of God until it overflows in your thoughts, in your words, and in your life? On this day, commit to opening your Bible every day and read it, meditate on it, obey it, and let it transform your life! Don't dry up. Drink up instead. Stay spiritually filled!



*Dear Jesus,*

*I have been restless within. Dissatisfied. Longing for something yet not knowing what. Seeking fulfillment in things that don't satisfy. But now I do know what's missing. I am thirsty for You. I am humbly asking You to give me a drink of the Living Water, which is Yourself.<sup>4</sup> You have given me this invitation: "Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life."<sup>5</sup>*

*So right now, on day 5, as I open my Bible to read, please let me hear the whisper of Your Spirit speaking to me. Bring the verses to life. I ask You to fill me with Yourself through Your Word until I overflow. To the praise of Your glory.*

*For the sake of the Bridegroom,  
And in His name—Jesus,  
Amen.*

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *JESUS IN ME*

ANNE GRAHAM LOTZ  
& RACHEL-RUTH LOTZ WRIGHT

# PREPARING TO MEET JESUS

A 21-DAY CHALLENGE  
TO MOVE YOUR FAITH FROM  
SALVATION TO TRANSFORMATION

**Continue reading... order today!**

**BUY NOW**



**MULTNOMAH**