

*Chasing Boldly After God's Purpose
for Your Life Together*

Marriage After God



Aaron and
Jennifer Smith

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Marriage After God

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To every married couple who faithfully lives out what it means to be a marriage after God. Thank you for your obedience to the Scriptures and for showing the rest of the world a picture of the true gospel through the way you intentionally live your lives for our King!



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FOREWORD

Aaron and Jennifer Smith have found something every couple hopes to find but few do—an excellent marriage. This couple is the real deal. The Smiths aren't sharing some theory they believe is true. They are living the message of this book.

Aaron and Jennifer really do have a marriage that is built on following hard after God—evidenced by the love they have for each other; the peace in their home; their happy, obedient children; and their fruitfulness in ministry. This couple has been proven in the crucible of discipleship. They genuinely and consistently embody the teaching they share with others.

You are about to experience their open, raw, honest, authentic journey to a biblically-mature marriage and the best that God intended for them. The real heart of this book, however, is its message for the Christian church—its message for *your* marriage.

Did God intend more for Christian marriage than that a couple enjoy each other through life?

As wonderful as a great marriage can be, *Marriage After God* teaches that God created your marriage for far more than most Christian couples ever realize. Your marriage is for His purpose,

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not yours. Have you discovered everything God intended for your marriage? Do you know what that purpose is? Keep reading . . . you're about to find out! And in the process, you'll grow closer than ever before in the most important relationship you'll ever have, this side of heaven.

Matt and Lisa Jacobson

Authors of *100 Ways to Love Your Wife*
and *100 Ways to Love Your Husband*




INTRODUCTION

What if I told you that your marriage has a purpose far beyond happily ever after? What if I told you that the unity between you and your spouse was created for something extraordinary?

God, your Creator and your Savior, has created you and your spouse with complete and perfect thoughtfulness. God, your provider and your Heavenly Father, has unlimited resources and immeasurable creativity. God, who is patient and loving, is pursuing you and your spouse every single day, inviting you to participate in the extraordinary things He is already doing.

Do you believe God wants more for your life and marriage, just as you do? Do you believe God wants more for your marriage than for you to just make each other happy? Do you believe God can do anything—move mountains, open doors, and part seas to get you to the place where He wants you the most?

Belief is powerful. Belief propels people from a place of dreaming to a place of doing. Belief in God is confidence and trust in Him. Believing God made you and your marriage with great purpose is the beginning of an incredible adventure you will never regret.

BELIEF
propels 
people from
a place of
DREAMING
to a place
of **DOING.**

When Jennifer and I considered what spurred us toward a desire to serve God together, we agreed that it was our belief that God could and would use us as a team for His glory. And that belief gave us the courage to say yes to Him over and over and over again. Even and especially during the hard times in our story.

We said yes to God when we decided to stay together, when it felt easier to walk away. We said yes to God when we chose to love each other, even when we didn't feel so in love. We said yes to obeying His Word when we did everything we could to get out of debt. We said yes to God when He showed us ways we could serve His body, and we said yes to God when He invited us to share our story. Not all of our "yesses" to God were easy; however, our mutual desire to please God is what helped us to say yes and to persevere.

When Jennifer and I got married, we had a united desire to serve God together. We didn't know exactly what it would look like, but we were willing to explore the opportunities He had for us as a married couple. Throughout our time of dating and being engaged, we prayed we would have an extraordinary marriage. However, we didn't stop there. We didn't only ask God for an extraordinary marriage; we also prayed God would use our marriage to do extraordinary things to build His kingdom.

Since we said "I do" and committed our marriage to the Lord, we have been on a journey of saying yes to God, a journey we both agree has been quite extraordinary. Not only because of the experiences we have had or the accomplishments we have reached, but because God is extraordinary. And He longs to bring His extraordinary into our lives. He is the reason we have been able to endure this journey together. We have experienced

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both poverty and abundance; we have traveled to different parts of the world as missionaries motivated to share the gospel with others; we have started businesses and ministries; we have overcome destructive sin patterns; we have grown our family size, intentionally striving to leave a legacy with our children; and we continue to participate in God's plan for our lives as He invites us to do all that He prepared for us to do, together. But it is all because of God. He gets the glory in our lives.

Our journey has not been void of the enemy's attacks to thwart God's purpose for our marriage. In fact, the enemy's flaming arrows, in combination with our own sin, almost destroyed our marriage. Pornography addiction, emotional eating, irrational jealousy, foolishness, and constant battles of selfishness and pride have all been difficult areas of our marriage that we have had to battle. The hardships we have encountered in marriage have been painful. We have often wrestled with doubt and insecurities about our relationship with each other and with God. Yet, no matter what we have faced, and no matter what we will face in the future, we continue to pray that God will give us an extraordinary marriage and that He will use our marriage for His extraordinary purposes.

In 2011, Jennifer and I launched our online marriage ministries (HusbandRevolution.com and UnveiledWife.com) to share with husbands and wives what God was teaching us about marriage. When we began these ministries, we had no idea what they would become. Motivated by a perspective that our lives are a ministry for God to work through, we said yes to God when He invited us to share our story with the world in a way we were already familiar with, *blogging*. Through these two sites we share daily marriage prayers, encouragement, biblical teaching

on faith and marriage, date night ideas, and reviews of Christian books and movies. We share personal stories of what we have experienced in our own marriage and how God continues to transform us into the husband and wife He created us to be. Since the first day we created these ministries, our desire has been to encourage married couples to turn their hearts toward God and trust in Him with their marriage. With the few tools we had in our tool belt, we got started, and this adventure quickly grew into an unimaginable reach into the hearts and homes of couples all around the world.

With the influence we were gaining in the lives of other married couples, we asked the Lord to use us to encourage them to be biblical men and women. We were confident that if we could inspire them and challenge them to be people who read God's Word and desire His will for their lives, then God would move in these marriages and use them for the marvelous work He desires His people to do. We imagined hundreds of thousands of strong, thriving marriages reflecting God's love story and impacting the lives of others as they faithfully live out all that God has called them to. We envisioned husbands and wives being unified in their relationship and in their parenting, full of joy and contentment. We could see communities being blessed by the lives and examples of these couples. We could see relationships being healed, needs being met, talents being used, businesses and ministries being started, and the lost being saved because husbands and wives said yes to God, working together to build His kingdom.

Eager to see husbands and wives embrace what God has for them, we wondered how we could inspire them to start considering the purpose of their marriage and help guide them to set

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the foundation necessary to fulfill that purpose. We wanted to point them to the Word of God and prompt them to answer some challenging questions. We felt led to write two devotionals that would lead a husband and wife through God's Word and invite them to consider how they can actively pursue an extraordinary, God-centered marriage. So we coauthored and self-published *Husband After God* and *Wife After God*, thirty-day devotionals that have been read by thousands of men and women.

Not long after publishing our devotionals, we began to receive messages from couples asking what they could read next to encourage them on their marriage journey. So we began to consider what resource we could provide next to inspire husbands and wives to continue chasing after God. This is the seed that would grow into the message of *Marriage After God*. We knew God wanted more couples to pray the same prayer we have been praying and to experience His extraordinary purposes for their lives. Yet, we believe it was also a message God wanted us to experience in our marriage for ourselves. He wanted us to mature in our relationship with each other and with Him.

We wouldn't say we are done experiencing what it means to have a marriage after God. In reality, this will be a message we will continue to live out and pursue until Christ returns or we are called home. However, God has given us an incredible opportunity to present this message to others through this book, to inspire husbands and wives who want to chase after Him and to do His will together, and we are eager to see how God uses this book to do His work in all of our lives.

A marriage after God is an extraordinary journey of making ourselves known to God, knowing God, and being willing to let Him use our marriages for His purposes. A marriage after God is

one that can faithfully say what the people of Israel said in Exodus 19:8, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do.” *Happily ever after* is a nice thought and a good thing to hope for, but it should not be your end goal. There is an amazing purpose for your marriage, more than just making each other happy. We desire you to pursue kingdom purposes with your marriage, to be a testimony to others of God’s love and amazing grace.

This world we live in has been tainted by darkness, but you are called to be the light of the world! It is you and your marriage that should be the light people long to experience. But you cannot be a light for others if you are allowing your marriage to be overrun by darkness. Those who belong to God have been created for so much more! You have been created for so much more! And your spouse has been created for so much more!

Our vision for this book is to get you and your spouse excited about using your marriage for God! We desire that you two experience the incredible intimacy of unity as you boldly chase after God’s will and purpose for your marriage.

This book is for the marriages who are ready to finally see what God brought them together for. Maybe you and your spouse have been having conversations about what is next, what you should be investing in, or how you can be used by God to effectively fulfill the purpose He created you for, the purpose He brought you together for. You have been in a great place in your marriage and with God, but there is a tugging on your heart to do something more. You picked up this book because you don’t want to be stagnant; you want to experience the extraordinary! Our hope and prayer is that this book takes you on a journey of discovery, inspiration, and affirmation as God invites you to work together as a team for His glory.

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If you and your spouse are in a different place, a broken place where you are barely hanging on, our hope is that this book would be the very thing to convince you to turn your heart back toward God and have the courage to change your perspective of your spouse and your marriage. Maybe it will be the very thing your marriage needs, to push you closer to the only One who can help you put it back in order.

So, we welcome you, no matter what condition your marriage is currently in, and we challenge you to take this adventure with us to commit your marriage to God and see how He moves in your life, your spouse's life, and the many other lives He will impact because you were willing to say yes to Him.

Everything begins with a first step; reading this book is your first step. We pray it won't be long before you and your spouse are running, with your hearts aligned with God's, toward the extraordinary good work God has already prepared for you to do.

You were created for this. Ephesians 2:10 confirms this, declaring, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." You and your spouse were made by God, and your marriage relationship was designed by Him to do good works for His name's sake, works that He had in mind long before you were created. You can believe this truth and so be empowered to walk in the extraordinary purpose you have been uniquely created by God to do.