

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *JESUS IN ME*

ANNE GRAHAM LOTZ
& RACHEL-RUTH LOTZ WRIGHT

PREPARING
TO MEET
JESUS

SNEAK
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SAMPLE
ONLY

A 21-DAY CHALLENGE UNCORRECTED
PROOF

TO MOVE YOUR FAITH FROM
SALVATION TO TRANSFORMATION

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to Move from Salvation
to Transformation*

Anne Graham Lotz
and
Rachel-Ruth Lotz Wright



PREPARING TO MEET JESUS

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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	00
DAY 1 A Family Member	00
DAY 2 Faithful in the Day-to-Day	00
DAY 3 Beautiful . . . on the Inside	00
DAY 4 Purified	00
DAY 5 Spiritually Filled	00
DAY 6 Kind	00
DAY 7 A Humble Servant	00
DAY 8 Responsive to Needs	00
DAY 9 Honest	00
DAY 10 Motivated	00
DAY 11 Unashamed	00
DAY 12 Hospitable	00
DAY 13 Eager to Share	00
DAY 14 Authentic	00
DAY 15 A Good Listener	00
DAY 16 Submissive	00
DAY 17 A Blessing to Others	00

DAY 18	Committed	00
DAY 19	Perseverant	00
DAY 20	Focused	00
DAY 21	Beloved	00
EPILOGUE: Preparing to Meet Jesus		00
NOTES		00

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."¹ 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.² 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.³

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.⁴ 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.⁵

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.”⁶ 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.⁷

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.”⁸

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?”⁹ 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.”¹⁰ 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.¹¹

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.¹² 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.¹³ 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.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ Abraham's grandson Jacob met the love of his life, Rachel, at a well, where he promptly kissed her.¹⁶ While fleeing from Pharaoh, Moses sat down at a well, where he met his future wife.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸

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."¹⁹ Later, Scripture makes clear that the water He was referring to was the indwelling life of the Holy Spirit.²⁰ 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.²¹

Life-changing well encounters still occur today. The prophet Isaiah exclaimed, "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation."²² 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."²³

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,