

THE BESTSELLING CLASSIC

*M*MOMENTS  
TOGETHER  
*for Couples*

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365 *DAILY DEVOTIONS*  
FOR DRAWING NEAR TO GOD & ONE ANOTHER

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DENNIS & BARBARA RAINEY



BETHANYHOUSE

*a division of Baker Publishing Group*  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

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Published by Bethany House Publishers  
11400 Hampshire Avenue South  
Bloomington, Minnesota 55438  
www.bethanyhouse.com

Bethany House Publishers is a division of  
Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Bethany House edition published 2014  
ISBN 978-0-7642-1538-4

Previously published by Regal Books

Printed in the United States of America

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The Library of Congress has cataloged the original edition as follows:

Rainey, Dennis

Moments together for couples / by Dennis and Barbara Rainey.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-8307-1754-5 (hardcover); ISBN 978-0-8307-1808-5 (trade paper)

1. Married people—Prayer-books and devotions—English. 2. Marriage—Religious aspects—Christianity. 3. Devotional calendars. I. Rainey, Barbara. II. Title.

BV4596.M3R35 1995

242'.2—dc20

95-37061

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14 15 16 17 18 19 20 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Life was never meant to be lived solo, and certainly writing a book would not occur if it depended on a single person. *Moments Together for Couples* has seen many skilled men and women touch its pages. Barbara and I want to say thanks to the great FamilyLife team who made this book possible.

Julie Denker, you deserve kudos! Over the past decade, you have searched, researched, edited and re-edited. And recently you have been a master coordinator of the transcription of myriad messages that have become part of *Moments Together for Couples*. Thank you for your faithfulness as a single woman. Thank you for your impact on tens of thousands of families who owe you a great deal. You are a woman of incredible value!

And to Dave Boehi, once again you have proven yourself to be of inestimable value not only to this ministry, but also to families around the world. Thanks for caring enough to hole up on Lake Hamilton and for becoming a celibate hermit for stretches of time. Your involvement had its definite mark of excellence on *Moments Together for Couples*. Thanks for your commitment not only to this project, but more importantly to me personally. I appreciate you.

A special thanks to Ron Durham. You were the right man at the right time to ease the burden of beginning this project. I appreciate your painstaking care in crafting many of these devotions for couples. Thanks for your dedication to marriages and families. You truly are a difference maker.

Mary Larmoyeux, no doubt there will be extra stars in your crown when you get to heaven for not only putting up with me as your boss, but also for all of the proofreading you have done during your four faithful years at FamilyLife. Thanks for catching those pesky grammatical errors that would have easily convicted me to a life sentence! You have been of tremendous help from day one at FamilyLife. Not only does the entire ministry run better because of you, but most certainly my life and family have been dramatically affected because of your servant spirit.

Many thanks also go to Sharon Hill for faithfully running interference with my schedule so I could slay the beast and feed it to the public. You have done a great job of protecting me not only with the calendar, phone calls and transcription, but also from the numerous gnats that surround our ministry and office. Kathy Horton, you have been a choice angel sent by God to work on our team. I appreciate all you have done in your brief time at FamilyLife. You've been a tremendous addition to the team. And finally, thanks to Fran Taylor who makes up the fourth member of the rescue squad that keeps our area going. I appreciate how you fill in and plug the gaps virtually without notice. Your steady spirit and pleasant smile have earned you the respect of the entire FamilyLife team.

Special thanks go to Cristi Mansfield and Lee Walti for the material you edited for this book. Thanks for rolling up your sleeves and pitching in on a project that needed your touch. I know your busy schedules, and I appreciate your help on *Moments Together for Couples*. Linda Treadway and Pat Claxton, you both deserve a tremendous note of appreciation for tirelessly transcribing endless mounds of tapes and countless chapters of books. Thanks for your service and team spirit. You are both a great encouragement.

I also want to say thanks to Betty Dillon. You've bailed me out with research and synthesized material when I got into deep water. You are a real sleuth as you track down various articles. It is amazing how you can find virtually any magazine I need. I may get to heaven and find out you are bionic. Thanks for your efforts at FamilyLife and for being a difference maker. You work diligently behind the scenes and without recognition. Thank you, Betty, for your commitment to families and for the gracious servant spirit you have demonstrated at FamilyLife. You are a valued teammate.

Special appreciation goes to the entire materials marketing team, especially to Blair Wright, Kevin Hartman and Rick Ferguson. Thanks for believing in this project and for wanting to see *Moments Together for Couples* become a reality. I am grateful for how you diligently prepared for this book's release. You guys are truly a dynamic trio, and I really do appreciate all you do. And to Merle Engle (I know I'm beginning to sound like a broken record), thanks so much for rolling up your sleeves and making this ministry happen. I appreciate the leadership you have given to this book and to FamilyLife.

Books need publishers, and without question, one of the finest in the country is Gospel Light. Many thanks to Bill Greig Jr. and Bill Greig III. I appreciate all you do at Gospel Light to build families. Undoubtedly, you and your team would have been a part of "David's mighty men." Kyle Duncan, you are first-class all the way, and I really am grateful for what you have done to make this a quality book. Thanks for putting the rubber on the road and pouring out a deep commitment to this project. And Virginia Woodard, you performed a yeoman's job as you coordinated mountains of editing.

Finally, Mark Crull, you were such an integral part of making *Moments Together for Couples* possible. I appreciate how you kept me going in the midst of car problems, phone calls, press releases and a jillion other projects that no one else could appreciate as much as I do. I am grateful to God for you and deeply appreciate the privilege of working alongside you over these past three years.

Once again, thanks to the great team who made *Moments Together for Couples* a reality!

## INTRODUCTION

There are many encouraging signs that our culture still recognizes the value and the power of the family. Just in the last year, major newspapers, magazines and television news shows have begun running a steady stream of reports about the need for strong marriages and strong families. We've adopted and popularized a phrase called "Family Values."

While our culture recognizes the need for strong families, few people seem to know how to build them. That's why we helped form the ministry of FamilyLife nearly 20 years ago, and that's why we put together this book—to help you learn and apply biblical principles for building a godly home.

While you can use this devotional for your personal times with Jesus Christ, you will receive the greatest impact if you work through it day-by-day with your mate. In our experience, most Christian couples wish they spent time together praying and encouraging each other from the Bible—but they just don't do it. They let other priorities crowd out what should be the most important aspect of their marriage relationship.

We'd like to challenge you to set yourself apart from the norm. Use this devotional to seek God together. Use these pages to grow closer together spiritually. Perhaps you could set aside a few minutes each night before you go to bed to read that day's selection, answer the discussion question and then pray together. If you do this for the next year, we guarantee your marriage relationship will reach a totally new dimension of oneness and intimacy. It will be the best investment you could make.

*Dennis and Barbara Rainey*



January 1

## TRUTH DEMANDS A RESPONSE

*Teach me Thy way, O Lord; I will walk in Thy truth.*

PSALM 86:11

One foggy night, the captain of a large ship saw what appeared to be another ship's lights approaching in the distance. This other ship was on a course that would mean a head-on collision. Quickly, the captain signaled to the approaching ship: "Please change your course 10 degrees west."

The reply came blinking back through the thick fog: "You change your course 10 degrees east."

Indignantly, the captain pulled rank and shot a message back to the other ship: "I am a sea captain with 35 years of experience. Change your course 10 degrees west!"

Without hesitation, the signal flashed back: "I am a seaman, fourth class. You change your course 10 degrees east!"

Enraged, the captain realized they were approaching each other quickly and would crash within minutes. So he blazed his final warning: "I am a 50,000-ton freighter. Change your course 10 degrees west!"

A simple message winked back: "I am a lighthouse. You change your course!"

Like the sea captain, we may need to change course when confronted with the truth. That's what happens when we make it a priority to spend time reading and applying God's Word. It is eternal truth. It doesn't change, so we need to adjust our lives to walk in that truth.

So many of us spend our lives avoiding the truth of God's Word because we don't want to walk in it. Christ said in John 8:32 that "the truth shall make you free," but as Herbert Agar wrote in *A Time for Greatness*, "The truth that makes men free is for the most part the truth which men prefer not to hear."

What is the Bible to you? A collection of nice stories? The foundation of a conservative worldview? Or is it God's Word, "living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword?" (Heb. 4:12). Does anything keep you from obeying God's Word in every area of your life—your business, your marriage, your family? Do you need to adjust the course on which you are heading today?

*Discuss:*

Is there a truth you have been avoiding in your life—an area of your relationship you have been unwilling to confront?

*Pray:*

That God's Word will be your guide in decision making and your rock in establishing family values and priorities.

January 2

MAKING THE MOST OF IT ALL

*Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise,  
making the most of your time.*

EPHESIANS 5:15,16

Someday, when the kids are gone, there will be plenty of ice cream just for Barbara and me. I won't find the can of Hershey's chocolate on the lower shelf...empty and with a sticky bottom. We will return to a small refrigerator and eat on the antique table we used when we were first married.

Cars will be clean again. The floorboard won't be covered with Sunday School papers or petrified McDonald's french fries. And gum, Legos, Matchbox cars, doll combs and even fishhooks won't be smushed into the carpet.

Doors will be shut, and I won't have to go through the house turning off every light. We won't stumble over herds of teddy bears, dolls and stuffed animals grazing or napping on the carpet.

Fewer tools will be lost. No frantic search parties at bedtime for lost blankets. Socks will miraculously find their mates, and the car keys will be right where I left them.

But of course other things will have changed, too.

When the kids are gone, we won't hear the pitter-patter of little feet running down the hallway, then feel a warm, wiggly body crawling into bed and snuggling with us early on Saturday morning.

No more little-girl, frilly Easter dresses or first days of school. No winter picnics or log cabin playhouses. No more fishing and hunting trips or wiener roasts or just goofing around with a childish hand in mine.

Someday there will be no more handmade Father's Day cards or wooden plaques titled "World's Best Mom." No more crayon drawings, verses and stick people drawn on construction paper and displayed on the refrigerator.

So until someday arrives, we're going to cherish our moments together. We're going to try to take seriously—but happily—the apostle Paul's counsel: "Making the most of your time."

Sticky or not.

*Discuss:*

What "season of life" are you in right now? Are you making the most of this time, fulfilling your responsibilities with contentment, joy and appreciation?

*Pray:*

For contentment and for the ability to focus on what  
God has called you to presently do.

January 3

## RESISTING CROWDED LONELINESS

*And Jesus said, "Who is the one who touched Me?" And while they were all denying it, Peter said, "Master, the multitudes are crowding and pressing upon you."  
But Jesus said, "Someone did touch Me."*

LUKE 8:45,46

With the world's population racing toward five billion inhabitants, it may seem strange that many observers see loneliness as society's number one need. This widespread disorder has been described as being lonely in a crowd or "crowded loneliness."

Although it would seem that families are a natural antidote for loneliness, we all know they don't always work that way. In large and small families among children, and between husband and wife, individual needs for "belonging" are often ignored and loneliness looms. Here are some symptoms: declaring some topics off-limits for discussion; substituting television, small talk or silence for meaningful conversation; allowing the calendar to become too crowded for time together; the wife immersing herself in the children and the husband in his work in order to avoid intimacy; refusing to confront each other on important issues and covering them up with an attitude of "peace at any price."

Jesus lived in a tiny, crowded portion of Palestine. It was incredible that in the midst of a mob, all jostling each other, He should take note of a lonely woman's personal touch. But that's just what He did.

Your family can be just such a gathering—a place where each family member can experience both the security of togetherness and the meeting of individual needs.

One of Satan's greatest strategies is to isolate people from each other. Is his demonic strategy working in your home?

.....  
*Discuss:*

Which path does your family seem to be on—toward greater intimacy or isolation? What schedule pressures could you adjust to give your family more opportunities for interaction?

*Pray:*

That God will give each family member some of Jesus' ability to overcome the threat of "crowded loneliness."

January 4

GOD'S "BOX TOP"  
FOR THE FAMILY

*Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.*

PSALM 127:1

Each fall I divide my sixth grade Sunday School class into three groups to compete in putting together a jigsaw puzzle. As these 12-year-olds scatter into three circles on the floor, I explain that there is only one rule in our competition: to put together the puzzle *without talking*.

The contents of one puzzle are deposited on the floor and Group One immediately goes to work. The group promptly sets up the box top that depicts the picture of the puzzle it is completing.

Then I move to the second group, dump the pieces on the floor and quickly give the group a box top. What the group doesn't know is that the box top is for another puzzle!

The third group is given the same puzzle pieces, but it doesn't receive a box top. Usually the kids in the group start to protest, but I quickly remind them there is to be no talking!

What follows is fascinating.

Group One is somewhat frustrated by not being allowed to talk, but it still makes steady progress. Group Two keeps trying to use the picture, but nothing seems to work. And since the kids in the group can't say anything, their frustration level soars. The group members look at me with pleading eyes. Soon, I see the wrong box top come flying out of the group!

Group Three is interesting. Because the kids have nothing to guide them, they do their own thing. The kids give up and just lie on the floor.

Am I a cruel teacher? No, there is a point that I make that day.

Life, marriages and families are like the pieces of the puzzle. The pieces are all there for us, but something is needed to help us bring order out of chaos.

There are a lot of competing blueprints and pictures out there vying for your commitment and mine. It only makes sense, however, to look to the God who created the family to learn a design that will work.

It's never too late to pull out your Bible and begin using the right box top.

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*Discuss:*

Do you think you are building your family from the right blueprints? Do you and your spouse have the same box top? If you continue on your current path, what will your home look like?

*Pray:*

That God will give you discernment to recognize when you are building your marriage with the wrong box top.

January 5

AMAZING

*And they were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*

MARK 1:22

Have you seen Jesus? I mean really seen Him? Not some kind of 900-foot-tall object, but rather the Jesus Christ who lives in the Bible?

When I look through the book of Mark, I see a Christ who is amazing. And He obviously struck others the same when He lived on earth.

For one thing, His teachings were amazing. The people were shaken to their cores by the authority Christ had when He taught.

Second, He performed miracles that were amazing. He healed the blind, the sick, the lepers. Mark 4:35-41 gives us another little outline or a story, a brief glimpse of a miracle that Jesus performed. This is no mystical myth. This was a real event that occurred. This passage describes Jesus with His disciples and how He rebuked the wind of a storm.

On a windy day you or I could go outside and say to the wind, "Hold it." But it would just keep on blowing. A wall could be built, but that really would not stop it. The wind would flow right over it. Yet Jesus turned an angry sea into a calm surface by speaking and causing the wind to stop.

Christ healed the sick, fed the 5,000, and not only walked on water but also made it possible for Peter to do the same. I sometimes wonder what it was like to be Peter as he stepped out of that boat. He had his eyes on Christ and he stepped out and it was solid. Then he saw the wind and began to sink.

I've heard Peter criticized in sermons for seeing the wind and sinking—for his doubt and unbelief. But he still stepped out—he had the faith to get out of the boat and "onto" the water! And he's the only person in history to walk on water, other than Jesus.

What's my point? Have you ever been amazed by His teachings? Have you ever really stepped out and taken Him at His word?

.....  
*Discuss:*

How has God's teaching made a difference in your life?

*Pray:*

That you would see Christ as the amazing God on a daily basis.