

MARRIAGE DRAMAS FOR ALL SEASONS

by

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Skits are great fun as well as a powerful way to stimulate insight and dialogue. Scripture has preserved a number of scenes from the marriage dramas of several couples. God left us these stories to be told and retold because they are indeed "dramas for all seasons." Each of them draws back the curtain on couples facing real life situations and crises not unlike those experienced in families every day. Marriage enrichment experts agree on three things. Couples need other couples. Couples can help other couples. Every couple has strengths on which they can build. These dramas can connect us with the wisdom of the past and with each other as we lift the curtain and watch and then make application to our lives today.

How to Use this Resource

These skits may be used as a series of marriage enrichment growth experiences for couples, as part of a worship service, to create discussion in a youth group, in evangelism, as part of a prayer meeting series on Christian relationships, etc. The reflective exercises included after each drama script are designed for couples to share between themselves, either at church or at home. Group discussion ideas are also provided.

Contents:

- *Leaping and Dancing and Praising the Lord . . . and the End of Intimacy* (David and Michal)
- *Choosing to Love Again* (Gomer and Hosea)
- *Better than Ten Sons* (Elkanah and Hannah)
- *Growing Together, Growing Apart* (Isaac and Rebekah)

References

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Drama 1 — Leaping and Dancing and Praising the Lord . . . and the End of Intimacy

Based on 2 Samuel 6

Narrator: David has waited for this day with the mixed emotions of trepidation and excitement for many months. He remembers well what happened the last time they had tried to bring the ark back to Jerusalem. The vision of Uzzah dropping in a dead heap beside the ark in the midst of the celebration could never be obliterated from his mind. He could still hear the music halting raggedly in the middle of measures, instrument by instrument, section by section along the procession as word of the tragedy spread through the crowd. . . . But today would be different. God had blessed the household of Obed-Edom because of the presence of the ark. And God

would bless the household of David and the nation of Israel when the ark was returned to its proper place in the temple in Jerusalem. Yes, today would be different.

Michal: *[In a monologue as she looks out the window of the palace onto the street scene below. You may wish to devise some props, but this skit can also be very effective with her standing alone at the front, looking down the aisle. She may be dressed in a biblical costume or in modern dress.]*

David has had nothing on his mind for weeks except the moving of that ark! I don't know why he's so anxious to get it here after what happened the last time! But he's not listening to me anyway. . . They've been gone all day. I don't know what's taking so long.

[To be spoken incredulously.] And David—the King of all Israel—left here this morning dressed like a common priest! He said something about being on an equality with his subjects and lifting up only Jehovah. I think it's going a bit far!

[Peering into the distance as though she sees the procession coming.] Look, there they are now, approaching Jerusalem. . . . *[With disbelief in her voice.]* I can't believe my eyes! I am so mortified! *[Anger begins to build]* After all I've done to protect him. How can he embarrass me like this? How will I ever face the people as the wife of David with him making a fool of himself in the streets? *[Gesturing down the aisle.]* Well, see for yourself! He leaps and whirls like a school boy with no sense! *[With disgust.]* Singing with the commoners. Singing to the gates! "Lift up your heads," all right! Lift up your heads and watch your King act like a stupid fool!

David: *[David, dressed in a simple white robe, enters and walks down the aisle joyfully, calling out to Michael as he arrives.]* Blessings be upon the household of David, for this day the ark of the covenant has been returned to Jerusalem. Blessings and honor and glory be to Him who reigns on high forever and ever!

Michal: *[In an angry, mocking tone.]* What a sight was the King of Israel today! Stripping off his clothes and running around undressed in front of the servant girls like an idiot who takes off his clothes without shame!

David: *[Responding defensively, getting more and more angry at her rebuff.]* What I did, I did for the Lord! You seem to forget that the Lord chose me to take your father's place! He didn't choose anyone from your family! Get this straight! He appointed me to be the leader of His people.

Michal: *[Turning her back on him in disgust.]* Humph!

David: *[Continuing to yell at her defiantly.]* So I'll celebrate before the Lord the way I want to. I might even do something worse! Who cares what you think, anyway. Plenty of women like me just the way I am! *[Turning his back on her too.]*

Narrator: So the Bible records, "And Michal daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death."

Group Discussion

1. What feelings is Michal experiencing? What are David's feelings?
2. What personal needs lead Michal to feel and behave in the way she does? [For example, she wants the king to be respected and behave with dignity because she feels his behavior reflects on her; she wants to be first in her husband's affections, etc.]
3. What personal needs lead David to feel and behave in the way he does? [For example, he wants his wife to share his joy in the return of the ark; he needs enough separateness from his

wife to be his own person and react to circumstances in his own way, etc.].

4. Why does the myth persist that "good Christians don't get angry?"

5. What happens when anger goes unresolved in close relationships?

6. Reconstruct the dialogue between Michal and David to reflect the following steps toward handling their anger more constructively.

Step 1: Understand that God provided human beings with the capacity for anger because this emotion provides the energy to respond when a person is being treated unfairly or oppressed. In marriage, anger serves as an early warning signal that there is a problem in the relationship that needs to be addressed. Anger also helps people establish and maintain personal boundaries and set a limit on the abuse they will endure.

Step 2: Give one another permission to be angry. Agree in a non-problem time that you will not attack, blame, put down or belittle one another when you are angry.

Step 3: Talk about the deeper needs and feelings that lie beneath the anger that one or both are feeling.

Step 4: Recognize that individuals process anger differently—some process anger outwardly with words and action, others are more prone to store up anger inside until it becomes intolerable and only then do they let others know about their feelings. Some want to resolve issues quickly, others need more time. Respect one another's differences and needs in this regard.

Step 5: From time to time, revisit the processing you have done about anger that arises between you. Make sure you have understood one another and have worked out a way to deal with your anger which continues to meet the needs of both of you.

Couple Reflections

[Take a few minutes as individuals to reflect on the following thoughts, jotting down a few succinct reminders of your reflections so that you can share them later with your spouse.]

1. In the family in which I grew up, anger was expressed by . . .
2. Feelings I experience when I am angry with you . . .
3. Feelings I experience when you are angry with me . . .
4. A time recently when I have felt good about how we worked through anger between us . . .
5. Ways in which anger still threatens our intimacy . . .
6. Things I can do toward growth in our ability to handle anger constructively . . .

Choosing to

Drama 2 — Love Again

Based on the book of Hosea

Hosea: In the beginning I fought with the idea. You were so attractive. A part of me always wanted you! But there were the persistent rumors! "Her father had his flair for other women," they said. "And she's a chip off the old block." But even as reason cautioned me, I knew I was falling in love with you. If only I wasn't God's prophet. Prophets can't risk a scandal! My mind was so confused. I didn't want to pray; I was afraid God would say "no." But I did pray, and God said, "Go and take her for your wife!" Then I thought my problems were all over.

Gomer: I guess I had a few misgivings about marrying a prophet! But you weren't anything like a prophet when we were together, and I did love you too. I just knew we would have the perfect marriage, after God said we should get married and all. I wanted things to be different for us than they were between my parents. I promised myself I would be the perfect wife.

Hosea: I liked being married, but I was so busy with my ministry and all. . . . I guess I just expected you and the children to be there for me when I got home. My work was so draining, I didn't need trouble at home. But I came to resent your chatter, your nagging, your demands on my time and attention.

Gomer: And I resented your workaholicism. But who could argue with a man who works for God! I thought I deserved more than I was getting. I washed your clothes. I cooked your meals. I cared for your children. But for what? You never seemed to notice! And worst of all, I could feel your anger. It felt like God himself was condemning me!

Hosea: The day I came home and found you gone and the children alone was the worst day of my life. I knew a distance had grown between us—a distance I couldn't seem to cross. But I never dreamed it would come to this! I asked your mother and all your friends, but no one knew—or would tell me—where you were. Only slowly, very slowly, did the ugly picture come together in my mind. You had found someone else. You were gone . . . with another man! Our second and third children were probably not even mine!

Gomer: I didn't mean to be unfaithful to you, Hosea, I really didn't . . . at least not in the beginning. It's just that I was feeling so inadequate as a wife. I felt like you didn't want to be with me any more. We never talked about anything but the necessities of everyday living. I know we were both tired and irritable at the end of the day, but I needed your companionship, to feel special in your eyes. I don't know how it happened, really. It's just that all of a sudden I found myself thinking about him, looking forward to the next time we would be together. The way he looked at me, listened to what I had to say, touched me ever so gently. . . . He met the needs of my heart, Hosea. . . . But I don't tell you these things to make excuses. I was so wrong in what I did. I violated our covenant at the deepest level.

Hosea: At first I felt the sting of rejection. Then I was angry and determined to retaliate. I would find you, drag you back, pen you up so you could not get to your lover. Maybe in your misery you'd realize how good life had been with me! Then in the darkness, loneliness would engulf me and the sensation of grief and loss would nearly overwhelm me. In those moments my heart refused to believe what my mind knew to be true. Oh, how I ached to have you back! In one moment I would determine to send the children to plead with you to come home. In the next, I would decide to set out to find where you and your lover were sleeping. I would fantasize about bursting in on you in the midst of your adultery. I would shame you, expose you for what you were! Then perhaps no one would want you. Or maybe I would simply dog your footsteps so you could get no pleasure out of being with other men.

Gomer: I will never forget the day you found me. I was so surprised to see you. I mean, we didn't see prophets often in our part of town! I had slipped from adultery to prostitution by then. My life was no longer my own. Sometimes I thought about you and the children, but home was like another world I had lived in too long ago to really remember.

When I saw you approaching, at first I wanted to run to you and throw my arms around you. I wanted to reclaim all that we had lost and start over like nothing had happened. But something inside me said, "It's over Gomer. Hosea will never want you again. You're a dirty prostitute. This man came only to expose you and make you pay for all you have done."

Hosea: I could never have come on my own. I could never have forgiven you. I could never have faced my part in all that had happened. But God Himself spoke to me, Gomer. He reminded me of how our situation is like what's happened to our nation. He said to me, "I loved you. I called you My son. I taught you to walk. I lifted your load. I bent down to feed you. But you have been unfaithful to Me. You love the wages of a prostitute. But I have forgiven you." Then I heard Him clearly say, "Go, show your love to your wife again. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods."

Gomer: It has been a long road back for us, Hosea. The process of forgiveness is slow and painful. Oh, how my heart aches at the pain I have caused you. I couldn't believe you or God would even want me back. How could He love, how could you love me, in the depths to which I had fallen? But you kept urging God's words upon me. . . .

"How can I give you up?

How can I hand you over?

My heart is changed within Me; all my compassion is aroused.

I will not carry out my fierce anger, for I am God and not man,

The Holy One among you. . . .

I will heal your waywardness, and love you freely, for my anger has turned away from you."

Hosea: It was more than either of us could comprehend. We started our lives together with what we thought was a perfect covenant, all those promises we made We didn't know how fragile human covenants are. Oh Gomer, will you be mine? Do not go out with other men. Do not be a prostitute. Keep yourself only for me, and so I will keep myself for you.

Gomer: I'm ready for that kind of commitment now, Hosea. Ready, even with the certainty of the disappointments and painful experiences known in all human relationships.

Hosea: We're both ready now because we have discovered together that it is really possible to be both fully known and fully loved. We know now that it is possible for a man and a woman to live together in marriage, not because they are perfect, but because by God and by each other they may be forgiven. We can be bound together by a covenant of love because our covenant draws on God's everlasting covenant for the strength to go on loving.

Gomer: So I can give myself to you

Hosea: And I can give myself to you

Gomer: Because He gave Himself for us.

Group Discussion

1. Reflect on the following lines from a poem by Ella Wheeler Wilcox (Quoted in Mylander, 1986, p. 31):

One fateful day when earth seemed very dull
It suddenly grew bright and beautiful.
I spoke a little, and he listened much;
There was attention in his eyes, and such
A note of comradeship in his low tone,
I felt no more alone.
There was a kindly interest in his air;
He spoke about the way I dressed my hair.
And praised the gown I wore.
It seemed a thousand, thousand years and more
Since I had been so noticed. Had mine ear
Been used to compliments year after year,
If I had heard you speak
As this man spoke, I had not been so weak.

2. What do you think of the following commentary on wedding vows by Dennis Guernsey in his book *The Family Covenant*? Guernsey believes that wedding vows would be more realistic if they read, "I take you to be my lawfully wedded spouse with the full knowledge that you are weak as I am weak; that you will be unfaithful as I will be, if not in actuality, then in fantasy; that there will be times when you will disappoint me gravely as I will disappoint you. But in spite of all of this, I commit myself to love you, knowing your weaknesses and knowing the certainty of betrayal" (Guernsey, 1984, p. 23).

3. In what ways is forgiveness a *process* rather than an *act of a moment*? Reflect on Louis Smedes' notion that we forgive in four stages (Smedes, 1985, pp. 25-28):

Stage 1: Hurt. Forgiveness is not for trivial annoyances. Forgiveness is for the deep hurts which cause so much pain they cannot be merely forgotten.

Stage 2: Hate. At this stage "you cannot shake the memory of how much you were hurt, and you cannot wish your enemy well. You sometimes want the person who hurt you to suffer as you are suffering."

Stage 3: Healing. In this stage "you are given eyes to see the person who hurt you in a new light. Your memory is healed, you turn back the flow of pain and are free again."

Stage 4: Coming together. In the fourth stage "you invite the person who hurt you back into your life; if he or she comes honestly, love can move you both toward a new and healed relationship."

Completing this stage depends as much on the response of the other person as upon your own. Sometimes the other person is not interested in the restoration of the relationship. Sometimes the other person refuses to take responsibility for the pain they have caused and chooses to continue the hurtful behavior. Then you will have to grieve the loss of an important relationship for which you had once had high hopes, and find healing alone.

4. Study the following Scriptural passages: Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 2:23, 24; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 12:17, 19; Ephesians 4:31, 32; Luke 5:17-26; 7:41-50; 17:3; 23:34; Matthew 18:21-35. Reflect on these great truths about forgiveness which they convey:

- All that we know about forgiveness we learn from God.
- Forgiveness has both unconditional and conditional aspects.
- God will take care of ultimate justice.
- He has given us forgiveness so that we may find healing from our deep hurts.
- Relationships may be restored whenever His Spirit is allowed to bring healing and growth.
- The fountain of God's forgiveness is prepared, even before we ask for it.
- Forgiveness brings healing at the deepest levels.
- Forgiveness is not about keeping score.

- Much forgiveness produces much love.
- God has forgiven us an impossible debt in Jesus Christ. He has set the captives—us!—free! In His name we are called to "pass it on."

Couple Reflections

1. Thoughts about forgiveness that I would like to share with you . . .
2. Times when your forgiveness has been very meaningful to me . . .
3. Times when we have struggled to forgive but have found our way through the process by God's grace . . .
4. Things I can do to keep God's gift of forgiveness alive in our marriage . . .

Drama 3 — Better than Ten Sons

Based on 1 Samuel 1:1-8

Elkanah: *[Whistling to himself.]* Where has the year gone. . . . I can't believe it's time to make our way to Shiloh again. What can I say? I am a man most blessed! I will prepare a sacrifice to the Lord with thanksgiving! And this year *[Hannah approaches from behind him.]* Oh, Hannah, you frightened me. What can I do for you, my dear?

Hannah: I just wanted to be with you for awhile. Can I do something to help?

Elkanah: Well, I'm just making preparation for our trip to Shiloh. Could you bring me that sack over there? I'm trying not to leave everything to the last minute. You know how hectic it gets with the children and all. *[Hannah's eyes drop to the floor. She says nothing as she retrieves the sack and hands it to Elkanah. Elkanah doesn't seem to notice. Hannah recovers her composure and speaks.]*

Hannah: I love going to Shiloh. There's something so peaceful about the temple. I love to go there to pray.

Elkanah: You bring a wonderful spiritual sensitivity to our family, Hannah. . . . Can you bring me the ball of string from that nail? I want to tie this up very securely. You know little Ben will want to carry something. . . . *[Hannah again drops her eyes. As she goes for the string, she fights back tears, wiping her eyes with the corner of her apron. Again, Elkanah is oblivious and chuckles to himself as he continues.]* Remember last year when Ben tried to pick up his sack and slipped in the mud, spilling himself and everything from the sack onto the ground? . . . I thought Peninnah was going to Hannah, what's the matter? Why Hannah, you're crying! *[Elkanah moves toward her and puts his arm around her shoulders.]*

Hannah: *[Struggling to speak.]* Never mind. I'll be okay. *[She buries her head in his shoulder and begins to cry aloud despite her best attempts to stay composed.]*

Elkanah: But darling, something is wrong. Now tell me about it? How can I do anything to help if you don't tell me what's the matter?

Hannah: There's no point in talking about it any more.

Elkanah: *[Exasperated.]* You're jealous of Peninnah again, aren't you? Haven't I told you I love you with or without children? What more do you need?

Hannah: It's just that it hurts so much to watch Peninnah with her children. I don't begrudge her children, it's just that I want *us* to have children, Elkanah.

Elkanah: Some things you just have to accept, Hannah. We've tried everything the midwives have told us. Just be thankful it doesn't matter that much to me. Some men would have divorced you, but I love you and I can deal with this. You just have to . . .

Hannah: But I've prayed and prayed. I just can't understand why it's not happening! And when she makes her snide remarks, it cuts to the bone. . . .

Elkanah: There, there, Hannah. I should have picked up on this earlier. You haven't been eating lately. But how many times do we have to talk about it? If Peninnah is making life hard for you, all

you have to do is come and tell me everything. I will take care of her. And as for you, I tell you every day I love you. And don't I give you double portions at every meal? Don't I spend special time with you? What more can I do? What do you want from me? Aren't I more to you than ten sons? . . . I tell you what. We'll see the best midwife in Shiloh when we're there. We'll get you pregnant yet! And if Never mind. God will answer your prayers.

Group Discussion

1. What do you understand of Hannah's pain?
2. Which responses from Elkanah are the most helpful? Which are least helpful?
3. What does Hannah really need from Elkanah?
4. How could Elkanah better convey his love by listening to her thoughts and the feelings behind her thoughts? What is he missing by not listening but rather trying to move toward a solution that seems good to him?
5. How might Elkanah better help Hannah cope with the possibility that God may not say "yes" to her plea for a child? (Of course, in the story in 2 Samuel, God's answer is "yes.")

Couple Reflections

1. Times when you have listened to me and made me feel completely understood . . .
2. Times when you have tried to listen to me, but I'm not sure you really understood, so I need to convey my thoughts and feelings to you again . . .
3. Times when God didn't seem to be listening and you helped me cope . . .
4. Things I would like to do to be there for you in moments of pain . . .

Growing Together,

Drama 4 — Growing Apart

Based on Genesis 27

Rebekah: *[Rebekah stands apart, angled away from Isaac who sits hunched over in a chair leaning on his staff.]* I just hate it when he goes silent! How can you share with a person, reason with a person, when there's no response? He knows as well as I do the will of God in this matter.

And it's perfectly obvious God knew what He was doing! Esau is not fit to receive the birthright blessing. He's headstrong, he's unrestrained, and he's married to those two heathen women who make my life miserable. But Isaac will not listen to reason or revelation! And now he won't even talk to me about it. *[Turning and gesturing to Isaac.]* Look at him over there, bent over more by his burdens than old age. I do everything I can to care for him, but there's no joy in our lives any more.

Isaac: *[In a shaky voice.]* It's a hard thing, getting old . . . feeling time close in around you . . . looking back . . . knowing . . . wishing . . . Looking ahead . . . feeling trapped and pressured . . . and so alone! Oh, I have a good wife and a prosperous household. But I have nobody to talk to who would really understand. I just have to do what I have to do by myself. . . . I have loved my wife from the day I laid eyes on her. I wish I could talk to her. But there's just no point. It's easier to keep my thoughts to myself. We have fought about this thing with Jacob and Esau so many times. . . . Oh, how I hate fighting! No matter how clear my thoughts are in my mind, I'm no match for her in an argument! Her thoughts fly like arrows, and my mind goes numb. She's always saying, "God told me this and God told me that." And who can argue with a message from God?

But if God had really wanted me to bless Jacob, why didn't he tell *me* and not *her*? Never mind. No one will fault me! Tradition is on my side. I *will* bless my firstborn whom I love before I die! *[Sigh.]* I only wish

Group Discussion

1. Genesis specifically records that, from the beginning, Isaac loved Rebekah [cf. Genesis 24:66]. What can cause a couple who love each other deeply to drift apart?
2. Why do you think Isaac and Rebekah have stopped communicating? How would you help them?
3. How do Isaac and Rebekah resolve the conflicts between them? What problems do you see with Rebekah's methods? With Isaac's? What would you suggest to them?
4. Solomon has great confidence that true love can weather many storms. Read Song of Solomon 8:6, 7. Why is love such a powerful bond? How might Isaac and Rebekah still draw upon their love to bring them together?

Couple Reflections

1. The love I felt for you when we were first married . . .
2. Times when our love has sustained us through difficult experiences . . .
3. Times when we have drifted apart and struggled to communicate . . .
4. Ways I can strengthen our ability to resolve our conflicts in ways that meet both of our needs . . .
5. My commitment of love to you as long as life lasts . . .