

## **Share the joy!**

Linda Hood Hicks

Life's great celebrations are meant to be shared with friends. And no occasion affords more opportunities for the participation of friends than a wedding.

Aside from showers, parties, and luncheons, a very special and meaningful way in which friends can share their joy and Christian love for an engaged friend is by presenting her with a Bible.

Certainly most Christian couples will already have several translations each. But this Bible has a very special purpose! It will be given as a most important tool to be used in witnessing in the newly formed Christian family—a Bible that the couple can give to non-Christian friends who visit their home.

A simple ceremony in which a Bible is presented to the bride (or to the couple) is also an act of affirming the decision the couple has made together at a time when the support of friends is dearly needed.

### **Preparations**

The key to a warm and intimate Bible presentation is simplicity. Nothing should be attempted that would detract from the primary purpose of the gathering.

1. Consult the bride in choosing the time and place. Remember that her time before her wedding date is at a premium. The place should also be chosen with the convenience of the bride in mind. Your church may have an especially lovely parlor or chapel that would suit the occasion, or you may prefer the intimacy of a friend's home.

Be sure the bride knows the purpose of the occasion. If you know that her wedding will be small, and that some friends will not be invited, tactfully assure her that you understand this, that you are doing this because you want to, and that she needn't feel obliged to send invitations to everyone present.

2. Choose the women who will participate in the presentation in advance. Provide each with a script. The script may be memorized or adapted in one's own words. Each speaking part should be presented in the same manner (each woman reading, or each woman presenting

memorized material or speaking extemporaneously). The method should be decided in advance. Plan whether or not you will use a podium, where speakers will stand, etc. Much shuffling and indecision at the beginning is distracting.

3. Plan how the occasion will end. You may wish to end with prayer and singing or "Blest Be the Tie" as a benediction. Select leaders for the prayer and song.

4. If you wish to use music, decide on the selections ahead of time and whether there will be accompaniment. If there is, be sure you have arranged for the necessary musical instruments. Music should be compatible with the occasion. "Saviour, Like a Shepherd Lead Us," verses 1 and 4, and "Blest Be the Tie," verses 1 and 2, would be appropriate. You will no doubt think of others as you plan.

5. Select and purchase a Bible. The binding need not be expensive. There are paperback editions of most translations. But keep in mind that this Bible will ultimately be in the possession of a non-Christian. The *Good News Bible*, Today's English Version, is an exceptionally readable translation.

6. (Optional). You may wish to prepare a copy of what is said in notebook form for the bride, with extra pages on which members and friends present (or those unable to come) may write special messages of blessings and encouragement to the couple. This can be as elaborate or as simple as you like, reflecting the nature of the group preparing it. Materials can be purchased at the time the Bible is selected.

7. Refreshments are optional, and the decision whether or not to serve them should be based on what is comfortable or usual, or on the atmosphere created by the Bible presentation you have planned. If served, refreshments should be minimal. They are not the focal point of the meeting.

Again, keep it simple. Remember that gatherings that appear to run effortlessly are those that have been well-planned in advance.

## **Presenting the Bible**

**Speaker 1:** Isaac and Rebekah loved each other as the psalmist said we should love God, with "all that is within me"-body, mind, and soul. Because each person was united within himself and herself, they were able to be happily united with each other. They were partners with

God in the parenting of two nations, responsible in their own way to the divine purpose, involved in the ongoing process of history as it moved toward the fulfillment of the prophecy in the ultimate end in Christ in His kingdom.

**Speaker 2:** Isaac and Rebekah weren't perfect. No doubt they had misunderstanding, quarrels, frustrations. But history was being made when they married. That is why they are remembered. They appear to us as being whole, and thus, holy.

We, also, have a historical responsibility as Christians within the marriage relationship. Marriage is more than a private affair. The community has a stake in your marriage from that point at which a new home is created. The thought that the rest of the world can go by is escapist and immature.

**Speaker 3:** Robert Y. Johnson, a minister and marriage counselor, said "History is no more made in the councils and legislatures of nations than it is made in our homes. For what people are is more fundamental than anything they do; indeed, what they do is the overflow of what they are. And it is the home that most determines what we become."

Under Christ, the home is a social institution, a school for communal and social skills, a school for citizenship so that society and government reflect high Christian standards. It is intimately related to the church so much that the church may be defined as "a family of families."

**Speaker 2:** Isaac and Rebekah didn't separate marriage from historical responsibility. They were part of God's unfolding plan. And so are we. We must also accept our historical responsibility in marriage, in our homes, and even beyond. For in Matthew 28:19-20 (TEV), Jesus tells us "Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples," and then to "teach them to obey everything I have commanded you."\*

**Speaker 4:** Responsibility to Christ is placed above all other relationships for the Christian-even the marriage relationship. And this is His primary commandment to us-"make disciples of all the nations." It is in this spirit and for this purpose that we present this Bible to you, (name or names), in Christian love. (*Present Bible to bride.*) We encourage you to use it in sharing the joy found in Jesus

Christ by giving it to a non-Christian friend, couple, or family that you entertain in your new home.

In giving of this Bible, we also wish to affirm you in this new partnership, remembering that it is also a partnership with God.

First Corinthians 3:8-9 (KJV) says, "Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one; and every man shall receive his own reward, according to his labor.

"For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building."

\* *Good News Bible*, Today's English Version (TEV): Used by permission, American Bible Society.