

BLESS YOUR HUSBAND

*Creative Ways
to Encourage and Love Your Man*



Angela Mills



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For Eric,
who persevered through those early years
with his fiery little flight risk of a wife
and loved her endlessly.

Contents

Foreword 12
Introduction: *How to Use This Book* 16
Before You Start, or How Expectations Can
Wreck Us 21

Week One

The Wife of His Youth 27

Day One Check Your Comfort Level 29
Week One Challenges 31
Day Two A Gratitude List 33
Day Three Your Song 36
Day Four Initiating Intimacy 39
Day Five Gift Giving 42
Weekend Reflection 45

Week Two

The Servant Wife 47

Day One Acknowledging Service 50
Week Two Challenges 51
Day Two Serving Like Jesus 52
Day Three A Suitable Helper 56
Day Four Make His Day Easier 61
Day Five When You Need Help 64
Weekend Reflection 69
Mid-Challenge Check-In 71

Week Three

The Barnabas Wife 73

- Day One* Filled to Overflowing 74
Week Three Challenges 76
- Day Two* Married, Social Media Style 78
- Day Three* Purposeful Reminiscing 83
- Day Four* Encouraging Him with Scripture 88
- Day Five* Encouraging Man-Friend Time 93
Weekend Reflection 97

Week Four

The Beautiful Wife 99

- Day One* The Beauty of Praise 102
Week Four Challenges 103
- Day Two* Dress for Him 105
- Day Three* Find the Good 110
- Day Four* Avoid Comparison, Choose Joy 114
- Day Five* Hand in Hand 120
Weekend Reflection 124
- About Bonus Weeks 127

Bonus Week One

Cultivating Contentment While Making Your Home a Haven 129

- Day One* Imagine Your Ideal 131
Bonus Week One Challenges 133
Household Cleanup Checklist 137
- Day Two* Stop Complaining 139
- Day Three* Content with Him 144
- Day Four* Content with Our Means 147

Contents

- Day Five** Creating Coziness 152
 Coziness Check 158
 Weekend Reflection 159

Bonus Week Two

Choosing Selflessness While Planning an Overnight Date 161

- Day One** A Reward for You Too 162
 Bonus Week Two Challenges 163
 Getaway Date Planning Sheet 169
- Day Two** Selfless with Our Time 170
- Day Three** Let Him Know You Need Him 174
- Day Four** Be the One Who Is Interested in Your Husband 177
- Day Five** Final Thoughts 180
 Weekend Reflection 182

Resources 184

- Using Bless Your Husband in a Group Setting* 184
Ideas for Busy Wives 186
If Your Marriage Is in Crisis 188
Tips for Wives on a Tight Budget 190
Memorizing Scripture 192
Online Content 196

Acknowledgments 197

Notes 201

Foreword

I love a good road trip with my husband, Bill. For us, there is a sense of adventure and romance to piling in our car—or even better, in a rented sports car or convertible—and hitting the open road. We always have a destination in mind, but the journey is invariably a mix of spontaneous *carpe diem* moments of “seizing the day” blended with some strategic, researched, quixotic, and starry-eyed quests for the ultimate romantic experience. My husband and I map out treks to breathtaking vistas and go out of our way for these magical memories. Standing in these panoramic landscapes, we feel like the stars in our own love story. Wrapped in each other’s arms overlooking a beautiful valley, sitting in a meadow of wildflowers, ankle-deep in waves lapping the ocean’s sandy edge, kissing under the rushing cascade of a tropic waterfall—yes, these are the precious heart-to-heart, body-to-body thrills that invite romance in to break up the endless days of the very hard work of balancing career, kids, and community.

This book is like that kind of enchanted romantic tour.

But even more, this book is packed with the little things, the simple gestures, the small kindnesses that make every day, even the most ordinary day, a lovely, dreamy expedition to the heart of your man! And because this book is laid out as a series of very doable blessings aimed at fostering connection, unity, and intimacy, let’s pause for a moment on one of those roadside vistas—from the vantage point of the heavenlies.

God values your love! The Creator connected you and your mate. No matter the circumstances, or how your relationship feels

at this present moment, God created marriage and it is a reflection of God's love to the world. Your love is a light reflecting God's love. Therefore, you and your husband and the well-being of your relationship is carried on the heart and mind of God. He sees. He knows. He hears. He cares. And the loving Father, who created love, can help create love in your life and in your marriage too!

On our wedding gifts to each other, more than thirty-eight years ago, a verse was inscribed:

“We love because He [God] first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

God will love you two as well. And some of those lavish blessings to your love life will come through the blessings charted on the pages of this book.

In one of our books, I explain that “to bless means to speak well of another person” or “to provide with power for success or prosperity.”¹ Angela's gift of *Bless Your Husband: Creative Ways to Encourage and Love Your Man* will give you tools, skills, ideas, and creative ways to bless your husband. It is like a roadmap, a GPS, for your journey of love.

Remember my love for taking detours to discover or create awe-inspiring experiences? Well, let me share how God led me to be writing the foreword for this wonderfully delightful and practical book. Very late one evening, I was working on a book proposal for my forty-sixth book. (You might be familiar with some of the books by my husband and me such as *Men Are Like Waffles*, *Women Are Like Spaghetti* and *Red Hot Monogamy*, or my books for wives like *52 Ways to Wow Your Husband* or *Red Hot Romance Tips for Women*.) As I was writing, my inbox alerted me to an email penned by a dear friend in publishing; she and another mutual friend at Angela's publisher were talking and planning for this amazing book you have in your hand right now, and they thought God might be calling me to be a part of this very important project.

I immediately signed up for the *Bless Your Husband* Facebook group. Then I began *doing* the blessing challenges and prayers. I facilitate a group called Red Hot Wife Challenge so I am a kindred

heart with Angela and her desire to encourage and equip women to become more loving, caring, and engaged wives, but to my delight, I found it enjoyable and exciting to be on the receiving side of all of Angela's brilliant ideas. (And you will too!) I just *knew* I needed to *meet*, in person, this wife who seemed just as committed, called, and concerned about the well-being of wives and the creative power love can have to build strength into a husband's life. I admit it—I did a quick Internet search to discover that she lives in my state! Bill and I travel more than half the year doing marriage and family speaking, and as I glanced at my own schedule I saw that Bill and I would be within a thirty-minute drive of Angela's hometown. I messaged her to see if we could meet for a double date. It was a detour to destiny!

The double date was one of those “vista” moments. Our turn off the beaten path led Bill and me to a cozy coffee shop, with sweet treats and a terrific time of fellowship with Angela and her husband, Eric. We recounted our love stories, shared the ups and downs of our marriage treks, and we all agreed that God's faithful love can carry a couple through anything!

And that is my prayer for you, my fellow traveling companion, that God will carry you—and your husband—through whatever twists and turns the road of life is bringing your way today. I am convinced this book, *Bless Your Husband*, is your travel guide to marital coziness, unity, and intimacy. I am elated that you also have the opportunity to traverse this blessing challenge in a community of uplifting friends. I encourage you to gather your own friends, the women of your women's ministry, your Bible study, the wives in your family or workplace, and cheer each other forward in this high calling of being a loving wife and helpmate. If you are able, buy copies of this book as gifts and bless other wives in your friendship circle.

Successful love is simply a series of wise and healthy choices to bless. In my book *7 Simple Skills for Every Woman*, I share one of my favorite verses:

“Love each other deeply [fervently], from the heart” (1 Peter 1:22).

The word translated as *fervently* indicates stretching out, reaching—perhaps out of our comfort zones—to bless and build our husbands.² To love fervently is to love enthusiastically, eagerly, energetically, and intently!

Angela has given her best on the pages of this book; now it is your turn. Give your whole heart to this treatise of love. Decide to give your finest effort, your prioritized energies, and your thoughtful prayers daily to this adventurous journey to *Bless Your Husband*.

Your husband will be so happy that you are choosing to nestle up next to him on this road trip of wedded bliss—but you will also be the recipient of the blessing. There is never a downside to becoming your best self, a more loving person. All your relationships will grow and be enriched as a side benefit. And God promises to bless you too; somehow, someway, God will send a personalized blessing to enrich your life:

“[She who] refreshes others will be refreshed” (Proverbs 11:25).

Are you ready for this fabulous, fun, and fulfilling excursion toward a more loving marriage?

Simply turn the page—blessings, simple and sensational, are right around the bend.

Pam Farrel,
international speaker, author of forty-five books including
the bestselling *Men Are Like Waffles, Women Are Like Spaghetti*,
and co-director of Love-Wise, www.Love-Wise.com

Introduction

How to Use This Book

This book is for all kinds of wives. Wives who are just making it through the busy days—nothing wrong in their marriage, but nothing special about it either. Wives who are in happy, fulfilling marriages and want to do something extra to bless their husband and grow in the Lord. Wives who are in a rough spot and wonder if they will still *be* married by this time next year.

This book is for working wives who will do the daily readings in the evening or in the early morning before leaving for work. It's for those who stay home with children and will read the challenges during nap time or while hiding in the bathroom. It's for newlyweds, for wives who have been married for years (or decades), and those who will tackle the challenges while their husbands pursue their favorite hobby.

It's for all of those wives and for everyone in between. Because what you each hold in common is the fact that you want to express love for your husband in words and in actions. Who among us knew it was going to be so hard to do and to be what we vowed on our wedding day? Who knew that love was going to be a choice we made over and over? Who could have imagined, while standing at the altar in a white dress that made us feel like a princess, that we would one day wear stained sweats and argue with our husbands over how to load the dishwasher? (Or is that just me?)

A comedian once said, “Married people, you're not really selling marriage. All we ever hear about is how hard it is.”

I laughed when I heard this, because it is so true. It's kind of shocking when you first realize how hard it is, isn't it? And our society has all too easily accepted that marriages are going to fail. So when a wife picks up a book like this and commits to being a blessing in her husband's life, it gives me warm fuzzy feelings. We're in this together!

Now, a little about how this book works.

This is an interactive book, which means you are expected to write all over it!

Each week consists of five days of reading/activities and an optional Weekend Reflection. Day One is a little different from the others.

Day One

Each week begins with an introduction to the week's theme, followed by Day One activities. You'll fill in a simple, goal-focused statement—something specific to consider and work on throughout the week. (You'll have quick, daily reminders of your goal as well, and a weekly goal check-in with the Weekend Reflection.)

The weekly memory verse will also be introduced on Day One. Then you're on to the challenges.

Bless Your Husband Weekly Challenges

This is the fun part. Every week you'll find a variety of challenges designed to bless your husband. Each day, or as you are able to throughout the week, choose a challenge from the list.

I've tried to take into account the different types of people, personalities, and love languages, so the daily challenges reflect an array of tasks. Some are hands-on, some are more emotional, others are spiritual. All will help you grow as a wife and in turn, bless your husband.

Most challenges will have a shareable hashtag attached to them. If you are active on social media, and enjoy connecting with others, you can share a photo or a post (while being sure to protect your

husband's privacy) and use the challenge hashtag. Each hashtag starts with "byh" so it will be easier to find others who are following the challenges in this book. Don't get caught up in feeling like you have to post every day. Just do it when the mood strikes, and connect with others who are on the same day you are, while spreading *Bless Your Husband* cheer!

And don't be afraid to go low-tech. If you don't have or don't want to use a smartphone, anytime this book says to text or send something to your husband, simply write a note instead. Or use email, if you like. Find the alternative you and your husband are comfortable with and do that.

Some challenges are simple and quick, and others take a little more time. Never feel like you have to complete one on any given day. I am the queen of rescheduling tasks to fit my schedule! I encourage you to do the same. The prayer, verse, and reading each day will do much to grow your heart toward blessing your husband. The challenges are a delightful bonus, so don't worry if you don't complete one. Give yourself grace and focus on what you have accomplished, not what you've skipped.

The beauty of this book is that you can keep it for years and go through it again and again.

Days Two through Five

Once you've made your way through Day One each week, you'll move on to the rest of the days, when you'll work through each of the following sections, spending in total about fifteen minutes:

Weekly Goal

Fill in a quick statement to remind you of your weekly goal.

Pray

A suggested guided prayer will focus on either your husband's needs or how you can grow as a wife. Where there are Scripture

verses supporting the prayer, those are noted so you can look them up if you like.

Meditate

After prayer, you'll do a quick, one-minute exercise to help you store that week's memory verse in your heart. Meditating on God's Word is a sure way to grow in character.

Dwell

Each day, you'll complete a fill-in-the-blank statement about your husband that is intended to focus your mind on his good qualities. Some statements are simple, others are deep, and some are silly. But they all will help you to train your mind to think on what is excellent. Some will help you remember what makes your husband special, and others will just remind you of or teach you (ask if you don't know) some of his favorite things.

Don't skip this section, because at the end of your six-week journey, you'll have something like a love letter with all of those filled-in statements. It will be nice to look back on when you need those reminders.

Breathe

In this section, you'll sit back, relax, and read daily thoughts for all of us who have accepted the six-week challenge. You'll be inspired and encouraged.

Reflect

This section is a daily guided journaling to complete after you have done the daily task. You may want to start with this each day, reflecting on the previous day's task. Some questions dig a little deeper into the challenge of the day, and some will just be fun to answer and learn more about yourself.

Weekend Reflection

At the end of each week, you'll find a Weekend Reflection section, with questions to answer and a place to check in on the progress toward your goal. You can answer these questions in the space provided, or you can use them for discussion questions, if you plan to do this challenge with a group. (For more information on using *Bless Your Husband* in a group setting, see page 184.)

Does this seem like a lot to take on every day? Don't worry, once you start Day One, you'll see that it only takes about fifteen minutes to complete each day. Some day's challenges may be a little more time consuming, but the majority of them are things you can easily add to your day, even if it's hectic.

Please note, this is not intended to be a strict challenge, it is intended to be a grace-filled one. There is no commitment to sign or pledge to make. Some days, you won't get around to doing the reading. It happens. That's life. Just pick up the next day and keep moving forward. Eventually, you'll finish. Resist the temptation to turn this into a checklist that defines how good a wife you are, and instead focus on how you have been able to bless your husband.

Before You Start, or How Expectations Can Wreck Us

When a blessing challenge is presented to some women, they respond by asking, “What about me? Why can’t my husband spend six weeks blessing me?”

I get it. Who wouldn’t love to be spoiled for six weeks? This challenge is about changing our hearts, not about changing our husbands. And that’s a good thing, because in case you haven’t figured it out yet, the only person you can change is yourself.

Now is a good time to check out your expectations and motivations for undertaking this challenge. Examine your heart. The reasons you want to bless your husband are more important than any of the tasks you end up completing because they reveal your heart. And God is all about our hearts.

The LORD doesn’t see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.

1 Samuel 16:7 NLT

Heart Check

Let’s look at some motivations for doing this challenge that might not be the best.

- 1. You want to change your husband.** As I have already pointed out, this won't work. Only God can change him. This is one of the hardest things to remember as a wife. No matter how many times I remind myself, I find myself thinking that something I do is going to change how my husband reacts to things. When you do something for the right reasons (which we'll get to in a minute), you're the one who ends up changed.
- 2. You want other people to think you're a good wife.** This can be a subtle thing. You might not be overtly thinking you're trying to impress others, but in your heart, it's what you really want. I used to belong to a marriage small group, and each couple would choose one thing to work on every week. Then, at our meetings, we would talk about how our week went together. All the husbands would complain vehemently about their wives, except for Eric, my husband, who always spoke kindly and positively about me, focusing on the good changes we were making. (And believe me, that is more a testament to *his* character than it is to mine.)

It wasn't long before I felt pressured to keep up the whole godly wife thing. I didn't want to let him down, and I sure didn't want him complaining about me like the other husbands did about their wives! I was so worried that I couldn't live up to being a good wife that I took my focus off what God was doing in my marriage. Instead of depending on Him to change my heart, I was depending on myself to be good enough. And we all know that doesn't last long.

A few months later, I was at a marriage seminar and watched a video of a well-known pastor and his wife. They spent the whole video talking about their bad attitudes, arguments, ridiculous fights, and how they worked through them. I have to say it was one of the most freeing experiences of my life.

Because I realized then that everyone has problems, and that when you admit your shortcomings, you can actually

grow, and sometimes you can even help others. These days, I'm free from the pressure to appear the perfect wife and homemaker, and because of that, I have freedom to be me.

Trying to seem like a good wife really isn't going to be enough to keep you going and will only give you superficial results.

- 3. You are hoping for reciprocation.** Maybe you want your husband to have a better attitude, or you want him to praise you and thank you profusely, or maybe you're hoping for an actual gift—jewelry, flowers, or something. This motivator is self-centered; doing something to receive something in return will always backfire on you. You may get your way for a while, but when you're looking to get something back for every good deed, soon nothing will seem quite good enough, and you'll be left with the same dissatisfaction you started with.

Of course, we hope our husbands will notice, and we hope they will be thankful. But that can't be the only reason you do the challenge.

- 4. You want to make your husband feel guilty.** Your heart is not in the right place if this is your motivation, even if you think it's going to be a catalyst for him to change. I think at times we've all harbored this hope on some level. We might not go into a situation hoping to make him feel guilty, but we might get pleasure from his feeling bad and think that it's going to cause him to see the error of his ways.

Of course, if you're really steaming mad at him, you may just want him to feel guilty when he sees what an amazing wife you are.

You can't go into the challenge for this reason either.

Now let's talk about good motivations for doing this challenge.

- 1. You want to make your husband happy.** You desire to cheer him, help him, and bring joy to his days. Maybe he's in a

bad place right now, and you think this will encourage him. Nothing wrong with that!

2. **You want to be a better person.** We all need to grow, and this is a good way to be less selfish and concentrate on what you can do for your husband. Maybe you need a little help focusing on your marriage, and the challenge can serve that purpose.
3. **You love your husband.** This is definitely a good reason! Maybe everything is pretty good in your marriage, and you're overflowing with love and want to bless your husband, celebrate your love, and make him feel special. That's awesome!
4. **Because you love God.** This is the best motivation of all for doing this challenge, and will stand up to the daily ins and outs of marriage. God never changes. Your feelings of love for your husband can and will change on a daily basis. Your desire to improve will come and go. Your need to encourage him will wax and wane. Make the decision to do this because you love the Lord and you want to obey His Word *and* love your husband.

Know that when you make this decision you will be attacked by the enemy. For sure. He doesn't want your marriage to thrive. So things will be going along wonderfully, and then you'll get in an argument or one of the kids will be out of control. You'll have financial problems. In-law problems. Illness. Something. And suddenly, it won't be so easy anymore to stick with the challenge. Doing this because you love God will keep you strong when your feelings won't.

A Final Thought about Expectations

Though this challenge may be a big deal to you, your husband may not even notice. Especially if you are already an attentive wife. He might not think to thank you or acknowledge your efforts. And

that's okay. The blessings you will reap in your marriage will be reward enough.

He might even notice you doing one of the tasks and have a bad attitude about it. He might complain or criticize you. If that happens, try to remember that this challenge is about changing *your* heart, not changing your husband.

The challenge is about purposefully setting aside a few minutes a day to focus on your husband and bless him. It is not about getting a new spouse in six weeks. Though your husband just might feel like *he* got a new spouse!

Decide now to see this challenge through, all six weeks of it, no matter how your husband reacts, and no matter how long it takes you to get through it. And I promise your efforts will not be wasted.