



Relationship Secrets *of* *Pride and Prejudice*

A BIBLE STUDY
BASED ON LESSONS FOUND
IN THE BELOVED CLASSIC

Chrisann Dawson





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A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Can one truly find relationship secrets in the tale of Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen? Is it accurate to call these foundational principles “secrets”? Perhaps. Many have simply read through the novel, enjoying the development of the characters, and the sequence of events, without grasping the underlying truths embedded throughout it.

This book will take a closer look at these life-supporting moorings found in Jane Austen’s novel, primarily focusing on the examples to emulate. But first, let’s get the bad news out of the way. The author also lays open to ridicule the irritating examples of those to be scorned: the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, the marriage of Mr. Collins and Charlotte Lucas, the impact of Mr. Wickham’s selfishness on everyone around him, and finally the backstory of Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet’s rocky start.

I hope you find this study a beautiful blend of educational, inspirational, and enjoyable! Enjoy with me the exploring of these timeless characters and learn with me how to laugh at their foibles, learn from their mistakes, and emulate their strengths. Some sections are longer than others based on the flow of the novel itself. Feel free to break up the study as best fits your schedule or your group.

Chrisann Dawson

WEEK ONE



CAST OF MINOR CHARACTERS

Mr. and Mrs. Bennet

Mr. Collins and Charlotte Lucas

Mr. George Wickham and Lydia Bennet

Although these characters are not the main players in the story of *Pride and Prejudice*, there are still valuable lessons to be learned from these irreputable relationships. Let's take a look.

Mr. and Mrs. Bennet

Mr. Bennet, initially attracted to youthful beauty and an outgoing personality, married a foolish woman. Mrs. Bennet, aside from her goal of seeing her five daughters well married, lived in the small world of pleasing herself. Mr. Bennet, a well-educated country gentleman, was forced to

tolerate his wife's folly on a daily basis for their more than twenty years of marriage.

Mr. Bennet's lesson: *practice tolerance*, even though *he* did it through humor.

1 Corinthians 13:4 advises: "Love is patient." In an alternate version, it says "Love suffers long." Mr. Bennet, for more than twenty years of marriage, had to put up with the folly of his wife. She was so foolish that she rarely realized that she was the object of his sarcasm. Still, he practiced patience with her. He had chosen beauty over wisdom and paid a heavy price.

Look up **Ephesians 4:2** and fill in the blanks. This verse praises four qualities:

- | | |
|-------------|----------|
| 1. humility | 2. _____ |
| 3. patience | 4. _____ |

Can you think of ways that Mr. Bennet practices these qualities? Describe how Mr. Bennet shows specifically gentleness and patience with his family.

Why is it important to wisely choose who you will partner with in life?

What are some qualities in a person that you admire? How do those qualities support a strong marriage?

Are you, or do you think you will be, as tolerant of your life’s partner as Mr. Bennet is of his? How is patience truly an act of love?

Mrs. Bennet’s lesson: *value wisdom as a woman.*

Proverbs 31: 30 concludes, “Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.” Mrs. Bennet’s pursuit of

husbands for her five daughters often prompted her to behave foolishly.

May we favor wisdom and reverence for God over ambition and folly.

Proverbs 29:11 shares, “A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.” Mrs. Bennet is so foolish that she openly gives vent to her folly. Do you think that Mrs. Bennet is aware of her own indiscretions? How would *you* advise Mrs. Bennet to behave when it came to seeing her daughters happily married?

Mr. Collins and Charlotte Lucas

Mr. Collins was a simple-minded, self-centered young man, who had the opportunity to think highly of himself because he had been commissioned to a pastorate which came with a beautiful cottage. He considered himself a great catch. Mr. Bennet had inherited his estate, Longbourn, through the legal process called an entail. The property needed to pass to a male heir, the said Mr. Collins. Mr. Collins hopes to bridge the rift with the Bennet family by marrying one of the daughters. When

Elizabeth turns him down, he aims his love at his next target, Charlotte Lucas.

Charlotte was seven years older than Elizabeth and was quickly becoming a spinster. Not willing to be poor and single forever, Charlotte embraced what Elizabeth rejected, namely an opportunity to marry a foolish man and gain a secure home.

Mr. Collins' lesson: *think less often of self.*

Mr. Collins only, ever thought of himself, his accomplishments, and his agendas. But **Philippians 2:4** states, "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." Mr. Collins assumed he would be a great catch. He assumed that Elizabeth would only see his value. Let us all be *less* like Mr. Collins.

1 John 4:7 says, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God..."

Although Mr. Collins is in ministry and should know better, he only seems to love himself. Have you ever known someone like Mr. Collins who only cared for himself (or herself)? If you are comfortable, write their name here:

What advice would you give Mr. Collins on having a happy and loving marriage?

Charlotte Lucas' lesson: *trust God to supply.*

Charlotte was willing to sacrifice a lifetime of living with a foolish man for the security of a home and provision. Proverbs 23:4 says, "Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist." Charlotte was not duped into marrying Mr. Collins, a foolish, selfish man, but rather she walked into the relationship with her eyes wide open, willing to pay a steep price for financial peace of mind.

Look up Philippians 4:19 and write it here: _____

Is Charlotte Lucas trusting God to take care of her financial needs? _____

What is one need that you have a particularly hard time trusting that God will provide? _____

We know the promises in God’s Word are always true, but share a time when God took care of a need for you and made Philippians 4:19 feel especially true.

In that era, women had few options for financial security. Would you be willing, like Charlotte Lucas, to trade your peace for a lifetime of security? Why or why not?

Do you blame Charlotte Lucas for her decision? Explain your reasoning.

Mr. George Wickham and Lydia Bennet

Mr. Wickham could be held up as one of literature's perfect examples of the selfish, self-serving man; for that he certainly was. Sadly, Elizabeth's foolish younger sister, Lydia, lacks wisdom. Wickham successfully lures Lydia into a relationship with no assurance of marriage in the hopes of manipulating her family for money. Only Mr. Darcy, and his motive of faithful love for Elizabeth, has the power and means to correct Lydia's glaring mistake and make her honorable once again. Mr. Darcy pays all Wickham's debts and anonymously arranges for a dowry for Lydia as well as a new commission for Wickham, just to give them a fresh start.

Mr. Wickham's lesson: *do not employ deceit to gain favor.*

At his earliest opportunity, George Wickham turns Elizabeth against Mr. Darcy by telling her a false story of how Darcy had not honored his father's dying wish to provide for Wickham. **1 Peter 2:1** admonishes, "Put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander." In a bid to make himself look like the victim, Wickham turned Elizabeth against Darcy. He later used these same practices to woo Elizabeth's foolish younger sister, Lydia, into a relationship. Wickham is all about being self-serving and deceitful.

Read **Proverbs 12:19**. What type of words last forever? _____

What type of words lasting only for a moment? _____

Have you ever known a self-serving and/or deceitful person? If you feel comfortable, write their name here: _____

How did people respond to his (or her) self-centeredness? Did their reaction surprise you or was it as expected?

Lydia Bennet's lesson: *honor and family are more valuable than ambition.*

Lydia, who only ever thought of herself and her own fun, was easily tricked by Wickham into a relationship with no promise of marriage. His aim was to use her to gain money from the Bennet family. **Proverbs 17:25** sadly shares, "A foolish son is a grief to his father and bitterness to her who bore him." The same, of course, can be said about daughters. Lydia cared more for herself than her family or reputation. Only Mr. Darcy, prompted by love for Elizabeth, could fix the mess she made.

Look up **1 Corinthians 13: 5**. Speaking of love, it says, “It does not insist on its own _____.” Lydia insisted always on having her own way. What advice would you give her to be careful of Wickham and not so easily succumb to his wiles? Write a letter (or a text) warning her of what may come from pursuing this relationship.

Do you think you would be wiser than Elizabeth Bennet? Would you see through Wickham’s lies and realize that you were being manipulated? Why or why not?

Would you be as foolish as Lydia Bennet? Would you allow your reputation to be stained in order to have fun and your own way?

The Bennet's, Charlotte Lucas and Mr. Collins, and George Wickham and Lydia Bennet are all flawed characters in this tale. But before we move on, let's take a look at how Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy started their relationship on such a rocky footing.

WEEK TWO



THE BACKSTORY

Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet

Before I can plunge into exploring the relationship “secrets” found in this tale, I must delve a bit into the reasons why Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy began their relationship with such a horrible start. And I really hate to pour the blame heavily on Mr. Darcy, but I feel he has a strong enough personality to shoulder that burden.

Mr. Bingley is only mildly handsome but has incredible manners. Mr. Darcy is incredibly handsome but lacks the gentlemanly manners of his friend. But Darcy’s good looks diminished in the light of his excessive pride. At an assembly ball, Darcy turns down an opportunity to meet and dance with Elizabeth. Charles Bingley urges his friend, Darcy, to dance. “Darcy, I must have you dance. I hate to see you standing by yourself in this stupid manner.” Bingley asks his friend to dance with Elizabeth. In Elizabeth’s earshot, Mr. Darcy replied to his friend Bingley: “She is tolerable; but not

handsome enough to tempt me. And I am in no humor to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men.”

What does the first part of **Ephesians 4:32** state? “Be kind one to another, _____,…” Mr. Darcy is far from kind at his first opportunity to meet Elizabeth Bennet. Mr. Darcy’s friend, Charles Bingley, is not as handsome nor as rich, but his manners are open, humble, and kind. Darcy’s riches and good looks faded as his proud attitude became evident. Elizabeth laughed off the wound but remembered the slight.

Are you generally considered to be kind and tenderhearted? Are there areas where you are snobby like Mr. Darcy? (Now is the time to be honest with yourself!) _____ What is your best advice for both Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy in this circumstance?

The second part of **Ephesians 4:32** could advise Elizabeth here:
“ _____ one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

Although he wasn’t sorry for his snobbery till much later in the story, Mr. Darcy still could have been forgiven by Elizabeth for the wounds he caused

her. Very often, we are asked to forgive even though the offender isn't sorry. Put yourself in Miss Bennet's shoes. Would you have forgiven Mr. Darcy more freely than Elizabeth? _____ On a scale of one to ten, how difficult is it to forgive someone who is not sorry? Circle one:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
impossible										easy

Share a time when you were able to forgive even though the offender was not sorry for the wound that was caused.

Through no fault of her own, Elizabeth was hurt by Mr. Darcy on their first opportunity to meet and get to know one another. A few weeks later, when she had the opportunity to listen to maligning gossip about Darcy from Wickham, she latched onto it with little discernment. Wickham falsely claimed that Darcy purposefully caused his poverty by ignoring his dying father's wishes.

Proverbs 16:28 reminds us that, “A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends.” Elizabeth Bennet’s wound from Darcy speaks to her normally wise mind and causes her to fall prey to Wickham’s malicious gossip about Mr. Darcy.

If Darcy had not caused that first hurt, do you think Elizabeth would have been tricked by George Wickham and his selfish lie? _____

Why or why not? _____

Have you ever permitted an unresolved wound to cloud your judgment about someone? Share this and how you overcame it.

A third offense was Darcy’s eventual interference in the relationship between Elizabeth’s sister Jane and Charles Bingley. Charles Bingley, Darcy’s close friend, had grown very much in love with Jane Bennet, courting her in

the style of the age. Although Bingley loved Jane enough to want to propose, Darcy stepped in to discourage him.

What does **Colossians 3:12** say? “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, _____ hearts, kindness, _____, meekness, and _____. “Mr. Darcy’s interference stemmed from pride and not humility. A humble person views himself as no different than his fellow humans. Mr. Darcy allowed his family pride to disdain the Bennet family, not only for himself, but also for his friend. Have you ever met or known someone filled with pride as a result of the worth or reputation of their family? If yes, can you share how this person was perceived by others around him (or her).

1 Thessalonians 4:11 encourages, “...aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs...” Mr. Darcy pompously separates his friend, Charles Bingley, from Elizabeth’s sister Jane because he feels like the Bennet family is beneath them.

How should have Mr. Darcy behaved concerning his friend and Jane Bennet?

Have you ever had someone officiously interfere in your life? Share the story and how you managed it.

Am I unfair in accusing Mr. Darcy of beginning the rocky relationship with Elizabeth? I think not.

As the story progresses, Mr. Darcy gradually changes his opinion of Elizabeth, not realizing that her thoughts of him remained rooted in that early bitterness, the gossip from Mr. Wickham, and Darcy's eventual interference in the relationship between her sister Jane and Bingley. The first proposal, one of the most admired scenes in the tale, was completely one-sided: love on Darcy's part, but only disgust and disdain from Elizabeth, thus the title Pride and Prejudice.

Colossians 3:13 says, "...bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive." Mr. Darcy forgot what he originally disliked about Elizabeth Bennet, but Elizabeth did not forget the offenses of Mr. Darcy. At his first proposal, she turns him down flat.

Do you understand Elizabeth's need to hang on to her wounds? Share a time when someone hurt you and you struggled to forgive.

Do you feel as if Elizabeth's initial rejection of Darcy's proposal is poetic justice? _____ Why is it that we crave seeing justice done?

Let's study some relationship secrets from Pride and Prejudice that made the difference and changed the tide of emotions and eventually the outcome of the novel.