

**Elizabeth Leseur (Servant of God)<sup>1</sup>**  
**1866 - 1914**

Elizabeth Leseur had two great loves: God and her husband Felix, who was an atheist. Felix loved Elizabeth as well; yet to their mutual sorrow, he couldn't share the life of the Spirit that Elizabeth cherished.

Occasionally the happiness of their life together in upper-class Parisian society was shattered by Felix's frustration and impatience. How could such an intelligent woman waste her time, as he saw it, with ignorant superstitions? Sometimes he and his friends would even ridicule and mock her faith.

But Elizabeth loved Felix too much to allow their home to degenerate into an emotional war zone. She realized that confrontations and arguments were useless; she chose instead to keep quiet and pray for Felix. In her secret diary she recorded how she used his efforts to destroy her faith as means to grow in love for him and for God.

Throughout their life together, it grieved Elizabeth to think that Felix might be separated from her for all eternity because of his rejection of God.

For her, life in Heaven wouldn't be happy without him. Yet when she died prematurely, Felix was still an unbeliever.

The story doesn't end there. When Felix found this diary, he discovered how Elizabeth's whole life bore witness to the truth of the God she loved. An excerpt from Elizabeth's diary follows:

Around me are many souls that I love deeply, and I have a great task to fulfill with regard to them. Many of them do not know God or know Him only imperfectly. It is not in arguing or lecturing that I can make them know what God is to the human soul. But in struggling with myself, in becoming, with His help, more Christian and more valiant, I will bear witness to Him whose humble disciple I am. By the serenity and strength I mean to acquire, I will prove that the Christian life is great and beautiful and full of joy. By cultivating all the best faculties of my mind, I will proclaim that God is the highest Intelligence and that those who serve Him can draw without end from the blessed source of intellectual and moral light.

In order to give, one must acquire; and to serve my brethren before God for one day, or for even a small part of every day, I must first have purified and strengthened my soul for many days.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from <http://www.amazon.com/The-Secret-Diary-Elizabeth-Leseur/dp/1928832482>

In time, Felix was transformed by the diary and his memories of Elizabeth. He became a Christian and, later, a priest. Now she may even be declared a saint. Elizabeth's diary and spiritual writings map out a path to marital harmony and greater love for God — especially if you love someone who stands outside the Faith. Let Elizabeth's two great loves, and her faith and perseverance, inspire you now.

**Small group discussion questions:**

- 1) Is there someone you love who has a hard time accepting your faith? How does this make you feel? What has been your approach toward that person in helping them understand your faith?
- 2) Do you have a deep desire to help others know and love God? Why or why not?
- 3) "It is not in arguing or lecturing that I can make them know what God is to the human soul. But in struggling with myself, in becoming, with His help, more Christian and more valiant, I will bear witness to Him whose humble disciple I am. By the serenity and strength I mean to acquire, I will prove that the Christian life is great and beautiful and full of joy." In what ways does your life bear witness to your faith in God? What areas need improvement? In what ways are you "struggling" with yourself?
- 4) Are you living merely for this life, or are you living to spend eternity with God and your loved ones in heaven?
- 5) What else strikes you about this account of Elizabeth Leseur? How does her story speak to you, inspire you to change / grow?

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<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Leseur, *The Secret Diary of Elizabeth Leseur*, (Sophia Institute Press: New Hampshire, 1996), 10 – 11.