

Do you desire for you and your spouse to have greater spiritual intimacy with each other and with God? Spiritual intimacy does not grow in a marriage marked by spiritual silence, but it flourishes when couples connect, communicate, and share things with each other and God. Praying together is key to increasing spiritual intimacy as a couple and is a great opportunity for husbands to lead their wives.

### **THE HARDEST PART MIGHT BE GETTING STARTED**

If you have not been praying together as a couple, it can feel awkward in the beginning. A good analogy to remember is learning to drive a stick shift car. At the beginning it is really hard to learn how to get out of first gear but eventually you get better at it and it is not as difficult to get out of second, third, etc.

You might want to use a devotion book to jump-start the process, like *Two Hearts Praying as One* by Dennis and Barbara Rainey. It will give you 30 days of things to pray for together. Another approach is to each write out what you would like to pray about and read it to each other. This is very helpful if you come from backgrounds where praying aloud was not a habit.

To help you get started, find a time during the day where you can both commit to pray together. Be sensitive to the normal rhythm of your marriage, for example, if your spouse is not a morning person then don't suggest mornings as the best time to pray. You don't need a large block of time initially, maybe 10 minutes, but try to find a time that is usually free from interruption.

### **TOPICS OF YOUR PRAYERS**

One challenge can be deciding the topics that you will pray about together. When you pray alone often the flow of your prayer is natural to you but introducing another person into the flow can be disruptive. To help ease the awkwardness, decide ahead of time the topics that you want to pray about, and even who will lead out on each topic.

**Pray Scripture:** Pray verses for the two of you by name. Including both of you in the prayer increases your grasp of oneness—you are asking God to work in and through the two of you. To keep track of your prayers use one specific Bible. It can become a scrapbook of your prayers by underlining the verse, dating it, and putting your names or initials beside the verses prayed. For example, next to 1 Timothy 1:5 you might write "Father help Ed and Sue have a love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and a sincere faith. 12/31/14". Start with a verse, then multiple verses, then chapters. When you have an extended time, such as family trips, personalize and pray through an entire book of the Bible.

**Daily Topics:** Think about the topics you want to pray for over the course of a week. This helps you be consistent about the things for which you want to pray regularly. As an example, pray for your extended family on Monday, your re|engage group on Tuesday, then your friends who do not know Christ, your church, believers around the world, your neighborhood, and on the 7<sup>th</sup> day thank God for His blessings in your life.

**Pray Big:** We serve a big God who longs to do impossible things (Luke 1:37). So along with praying for the small, pray for the huge. Pray for things that only God can do. Determine what area of ministry or part of the world or grouping you have a passion about and ask God to do big things for them. You can't be all or go all places but you can pray about them. Remember, whenever you pray, you are affecting eternity!

**Pray Fun Prayers:** When we delight in the Lord, He gives us the desires of our heart (Psalm 37:4) so create some prayer traditions that become part of who you are as a couple. For example,

- When you are driving, use red lights to pray for classmates, team members, and enemies. It makes red lights become much less obtrusive to your day.
- At graduations, pray for each graduate as they cross the stage to come to know Christ and be used by Him. It will keep you awake and provide some lasting value to what might be looked at as wasted time.
- On New Year's Eve, decide on a prayer to pray for you as a couple/family for the next year.

**Pray for Character Qualities:** As followers of Christ, Christlikeness is our goal (Romans 8:29). Discuss character qualities that God wants to change in your life and pray for them (truthfulness, joyfulness, self-control, humility, attentiveness, etc.). God is more interested in who you are than what you do.

## VARIETY IN PRAYING

Working toward praying together every day is a good goal if you want to increase your spiritual intimacy with one another. When and how long you pray will vary but your goal is to increasingly enjoy praying together, and going a day without it feels like you've missed something special. Be sure to vary your approach as you pray together to prevent it from becoming a dull routine. Here are a few ideas:

**Walk and Pray:** You get to have conversation with God and get exercise at the same time! As you walk, just listen to your spouse praying without comment, criticism or "fix it advice", remembering that God is our "fixer". In addition to talking with God, this is a great way to make you aware of each other's heart.

**Pray 5 Second Prayers:** God wants to hear from us. He wants us to keep an attitude of prayer at all times, but prayers don't have to be long to be effective. You can pray on the phone, in the car at red lights, by email or text, etc. Some sample 5 second prayers:

- Lord, help us to encourage each other in our faith today. Romans 1:12
- Father, help us not waiver in believing your promises. Romans 4:20
- God, remind us that we are your prized possessions. James 1:18
- Father, grant us your wisdom, to see life through your eyes. James 1:5

**Pray Without Delay:** When someone asks you to pray for them, pray on the spot. An "I'll be praying for you" can easily slip into forgetting to pray for them.

## REWARDS OF PRAYING TOGETHER

The biggest reward of praying together is that you get on God's agenda rather than trying to get God on your agenda. The joy of your relationship and intimacy with the Lord and each other will grow richer as you share more of yourself with each other and with the Lord. Praying together will:

- Help you to prioritize your relationship with the Lord and each other instead of being neutral or neglectful.
- Keep you from living life with a "my things" and "your things" attitude, but rather an "ours in the Lord" attitude.
- Help you keep the other person more important than yourself.
- Help dissipate anger. It is hard to stay mad and bitter when you are praying with and for each other daily.
- Help you be purposeful with all the days you are blessed to have breath and life and be on mission with the Lord.
- Help you have a tighter grip on what is eternal and a looser grip on the now that will fade away.
- Help you cast your cares on the Lord.
- Allow "my" calendar to become "our" calendar because you share the needs and burdens with each other through praying about them together.
- Salvage the day and even the interruptions of the day.

