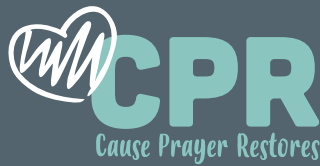


Couples PRAYING Together



SIX WEEK PRAYER GUIDE

A PRAYER CHALLENGE FOR MARRIED COUPLES



Written by Leighann McCoy

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Introduction

You hold in your hands a collection of words on paper. There's no magic here—only thoughts and suggestions of what to say when you get together with your spouse to pray.

However, God releases His power when we pray. And IF you take this booklet and use it over the next few weeks to pray daily with your spouse (regardless of your circumstances, or your relational issues; your busy-ness or even your travel schedule), you will experience God work wonders in your marriage and your family. How can I be so sure? Because I've seen Him do this over and over again each and every time we've called our couples to pray during our annual CPR emphasis (which begins on Mother's Day and culminates on Father's Day).

As you set out on this journey, let me give you one word of advice about prayer itself. God answers pray-ers' (those who pray) more than prayers (what they say).

Ron Dunn explains:

"Two things determine the answer to any prayer: First, the prayer must be according to the will of God, and second, the pray-er must be according to the will of God. Regardless of how earnestly we cry out to God or how desperately we try to believe, any petition that lies outside the will of God is doomed to failure. Prayer doesn't get man's will done in heaven; it gets God's will done on earth."

(from Don't Just Stand There, Pray Something, p. 131)

As you allow the Holy Spirit to take you on this couples adventure of prayer, realize that your prayers will only be answered when they agree with God's will. Realize also that you will only be answered when you agree with God's will. You will grow in your understanding of God's will as you pray and read His Word, the Bible.

I'm excited as we launch this year's emphasis. I have a feeling that God is about to do a whole lot of work in each of our hearts as we invite Him to line us up with His purposes and His plans. I believe that He is eager to demonstrate His power in and through our marriages.

You don't need me to tell you that Christian marriages are under attack. Right now there are couples reading these words who cannot imagine spending 10-15 minutes together on a daily basis, much less praying. Some couples have already filed for divorce and are just biding their time until the legal process is done. I believe that God's going to perform miracles in those families. Where husbands' hearts are turned against their wives, God is going to turn them back. Where wives' hearts are cold toward their husbands, God is going to warm them again. Where children are crying out for their parents to save their homes—God is going to hear those cries and SAVE SOME HOMES!

God works through prayer and through practical ministry. If your marriage is in a crisis, take full advantage of the ministries we offer marriages through Thompson Station Church. Check out our website for more information on:

- Marriage Mentoring (get partnered with a mentor couple and discover how to build a healthy marriage)
- Marriage Helpers (a partnership ministry)
- Counseling (both pastoral and professional counseling is available through the church, call the office for more information)

At Thompson Station Church we believe that prayer IS the work of the ministry. We believe that when we work, we work hard; but when we pray, God works. And we believe that when God works He does exceedingly abundantly beyond all we could ask or imagine. We (your pastors and staff) will be praying with you (as we pray with our own spouses); but we will also be praying for you. We are eager to experience God's answers to our prayers.

This is not complicated, simply set aside 10-15 minutes a day; read the directions in this booklet; follow them and see where God takes you. For those of you who are waiting to divorce—I DARE you to take the CPR challenge. Commit 10 minutes a day to the man or woman you once committed your life to and then, if you still want to call it quits, have at it. For those of you who are standing strong in your marriages, I exhort you to not only participate with us in the CPR challenge, but also to pray for those you know whose marriages need miracles.

Let's DO THIS!

Commitment

Prayerfully consider the sacrifice of time that this commitment will require of you. Discuss how you will fulfill this commitment if you travel; if your children keep you running in circles; and if you don't really even like one another these days. Then, sign this commitment in the presence of your spouse and read it verbally to one another.

I _____ do solemnly promise to initiate daily prayer time with my wife during this challenge.

I _____ do solemnly promise to pray with my husband every day during this challenge.

PRAY THIS:

Lord, help me to initiate prayer with (your wife's name) daily. Remind me when I forget. Give me discipline and courage to fulfill this commitment.

Lord, thank You for (your husband's name) and his leadership in this initiative. Help me to make praying together easy by encouraging him daily. Give us both tender hearts toward one another and guard us from anything that might disrupt this commitment.

Thank You for hearing this prayer and for all that You will do through this six-week challenge.

Prayer Guide

Each week begins on Sunday with a renewed commitment for the next week and a praise for the progress you've made so far praying with your spouse. Monday – Friday's assignments consist of a Bible verse and a prayer suggestion. On Saturday you will find an article followed by a suggestion to guide your prayer. Plan to spend about 10 minutes together on Saturday.

There is space provided in this guide for you to write a note to your spouse. When Tom and I dated we wrote notes to one another. Way back then we didn't have texting or social media--but we did have pen and paper. If you'd like; take the time to write a note to your spouse at the end of each week. Tell them whatever you'd like in response to the time you've spent in prayer throughout the week. Be sure to mention the ways God has answered your prayers and drawn you closer to one another.

These notes can serve as a "travel log" capturing the rich experience you will have as you take this prayer journey together.

Week 1

Sunday DAY ONE

Thank God for your spouse. Thank Him for choosing to put the two of you together and invite the Holy Spirit to empower you to make good on this commitment.



Monday

DAY TWO

For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.—Genesis 2:24

Thank God for one specific thing you remember about your wedding. Ask God to restore to you the joyful anticipation you experienced that day.



Tuesday

DAY THREE

Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.—Ephesians 5:25

Husbands, ask God to create love in you—for your wife. Wives, ask the Holy Spirit to create in you a soft heart—easy to love. Allow the Holy Spirit to reveal to you areas where you've perhaps been less than loving to one another. Repent of these areas and receive forgiveness together.

Wednesday

DAY FOUR

In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands. Then, even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will be won over by observing your pure and reverent lives. Don't be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God. This is how the holy women of old made themselves beautiful. They trusted God and accepted the authority of their husbands. For instance, Sarah obeyed her husband, Abraham, and called him her master. You are her daughters when you do what is right without fear of what your husbands might do. 1 Peter 3:1-6

Wives, ask God to forgive you if you've failed to be gentle and pure in spirit, invite Him to create a submissive spirit in you. Husbands, tell God how beautiful your wife is to you—thank Him for her.

Thursday

DAY FIVE

“For I hate divorce,” says the Lord, the God of Israel.—Malachi 2:17a (NASB)

God hates divorce because divorce hates you. If you’ve experienced divorce, thank God for His sustaining grace and the reconciliation He’s brought in your life. If you still harbor bitterness toward a former spouse, ask God to take that away.

If you have never experienced divorce, thank God for creating in you a marriage that runs against the current of our culture. Renew your resolve to continue loving the one you are married to—and keep on living as a testimony of God’s grace.



Friday

DAY SIX

"For I hate divorce," says the Lord, the God of Israel.—Malachi 2:17a (NASB)

Pray for couples you know who are contemplating divorce. Ask God to allow your marriage to be an illustration of a marriage transformed by prayer!

Saturday

DAY SEVEN

"It was also said, whoever divorces his wife must give her a written notice of divorce. But I tell you, everyone who divorces his wife, except in a case of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery."

Matthew 5:30-31

Barclay's Daily Study Bible says this about Jesus' teaching on divorce:

"There is no time in history when the marriage bond stood in greater peril of destruction than in the days when Christianity first came into this world. At that time the world was in danger of witnessing the almost total break-up of marriage and the collapse of the home."

This commentary goes on to explain that Christianity had its background in the Jewish, Greek and Roman worlds.

Marriage in the Jewish World: Jewish culture held marriage in high esteem. All men were bound by sacred duty to marry and bear children. The only reason they might abstain from marriage was to devote themselves to the study of the law. Ideally, Jews abhorred divorce. No doubt the Rabbi's might have spoken their own version of "what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

But in actuality, the Jews practiced divorce frequently. In Jewish culture, women were deemed as property solely under the discretion of her father, then her husband. A woman could not divorce her husband for any reason, but a man could divorce his wife at will. And all that had to be done in order to

put a marriage "asunder" was for the husband to give his wife a written statement like this in the presence of two witnesses, "Let this be from

me the writ of divorce and letter of dismissal and deed of liberation, that thou mayest marry whatsoever man thou wilt.”

By the time Jesus spoke the words in Matthew 5:30-31, some Jewish men were divorcing their wives simply because they'd found a woman more attractive than she. Jesus spoke these words at a time similar to ours when the fabric of the family was being torn to shreds by cultural morals that were melting with the tide of self-serving human nature.

When you pray: Ask God to divorce proof your marriage. Look one another in the eyes and say, “I will never divorce you.” Pray for couples you know that are suffering the effects of divorce. Pray for those that are considering divorce as an option right now. Ask God to allow your marriage to be an encouragement to others.

CONGRATULATIONS! You've prayed together (regardless) for one whole week!!

Write a note to your spouse!



WRITE YOUR HUSBAND A NOTE:



WRITE YOUR WIFE A NOTE:

Week 2

Sunday DAY EIGHT

Thank God for the experience of last week and ask Him to create the time and the desire to continue praying together this week.



Monday

DAY NINE

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Ephesians 5:1

Ask God to remind you of what love acts like. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the deception of what the world calls love, and for the courage to live lives of love with one another.



Tuesday

DAY TEN

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.—Hebrews 12:1 (NLT)

Husbands, ask God to give you strength and endurance in your mission to set your family against the moral decline of our culture. Be honest before God and let your wife hear how you struggle as you confess your fears and your shortcoming to Him.



Wednesday

DAY ELEVEN

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.—Colossians 3:12

Wives, speak honestly to your heavenly Father. Tell Him how you want to encourage your husband—how difficult it is to clothe yourself with gentleness, kindness and submission. Ask God to make you the wife He wants you to be.



Thursday

DAY TWELVE

"Kiss me again and again, for your love is sweeter than wine." Song of Songs 1:2 (TLB)

Thank God for the tenderness He creates between you. Invite Him to take the two of you on a journey toward even greater intimacy.



Friday

DAY THIRTEEN

“Beloved, how right they are to adore you!”

Song of Songs 1:4

Wives, thank God for the specific traits you “adore” in your husband. Invite God to magnify what is strong in him—so that God will be glorified.


Husbands, thank God for specific characteristics you adore in your wife. Ask God to be honored in these places in her.

Saturday

DAY FOURTEEN

Many of you may join Tom and me in our commitment to remain married until “death do us part.” In fact, I know lots of couples who held tenaciously to that commitment, but were nearly destroyed in the process because they never thought about making one more. Tom and I quickly realized that if we were to keep the first commitment, we most definitely needed to make another: Misery is not an option.


When I was researching the New Testament culture of marriage, I also read this (from Barclay): ...A Roman orator, Metillus Numidicus, made an extraordinary speech: “If Romans, it were possible to love without wives, we would be free from trouble; but since it is the law of nature that we can neither live pleasantly with them, nor at all without them, we must take thought for the continuance



of the race rather than for our own brief pleasure." ...There was another cynical Roman jest: "Marriage brings only two happy days—the day when the husband first clasps his wife to his breast, and the day when he lays her in the tomb."

You may be laughing with me as you read that statement. But how many men and women do you know who are held captive in miserable marriages? Tom and I determined in the early days of our marriage to never ever be satisfied with misery. This commitment demands communication. This commitment requires time. This "no misery" clause to our marriage relationship necessitates other-centeredness and tender loving care.

When you pray: Would you be willing to commit to a "no misery" clause in your marriage? If so, hold hands with each other, look into one another's eyes and repeat this vow:



I (your name) take you, (your spouse's name) to be my best friend, companion and object of my affection all the days of my life. I promise to never be satisfied with tension between us, unresolved conflict or unconfessed hurt. I will not harbor bitterness or resentment and will do everything within my power to make it easy for you to do the same. (your spouse's name), I promise to say "I'm sorry" as often as is necessary and to respond with "I forgive you" as often as you apologize to me. So help me God. Amen.

Allow God to show you if "I'm sorry" and "I forgive you" need to be said right now.

CONGRATULATIONS! You've completed the 2nd week of your prayer challenge! You are advancing the kingdom of God!

Don't forget to write a note to your spouse.

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WRITE YOUR HUSBAND A NOTE:

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WRITE YOUR WIFE A NOTE:

Week 3

Sunday DAY FIFTEEN

Thank God for another week of praying together. Thank Him for what you are learning about one another, and what you are experiencing together in His presence. Tell God that you are glad to continue in this battle plan and that you will continue to pray together -regardless!



Monday

DAY SIXTEEN

"How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful! Your eyes are doves."

Song of Songs 1:15

What makes your spouse beautiful to you? Thank God for one another's physical beauty (be specific). If you have biological children, thank God for the physical similarities you see in them that remind you of your spouse. If you have adopted children or a blended family, thank God for the personality traits you see in them that you also admire in your spouse.



Tuesday

DAY SEVENTEEN

How handsome you are, my lover! Oh, how charming! And our bed is verdant!"

Song of Songs 1:16

Thank God for the sexual expression of love that you share. Ask Him to allow that part of your relationship to grow deeper. (more about this on Saturday)



Wednesday

DAY EIGHTEEN

My love is mine and I am his.

Song of Songs 2:16

Thank God for the trust the two of you share. Thank Him that you always have someone to “be” with. Thank God that when you go out to eat, there is someone sitting at the table with you. Thank God for the companionship you share.



Thursday

DAY NINETEEN

*I belong to my lover, and his desire is for me.
Song of Songs 7:10*

Thank God for the desire you have for one another. Ask God to increase that desire, so that you will be satisfied in one another's arms.



Friday

DAY TWENTY

Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away.—Song of Songs 8:7

Invite God to grow your love for one another to be like a raging river - ask Him to make it strong, undeterred, confident and powerful. Thank God for allowing your love for one another to be a picture of His love for the church.



Saturday

DAY TWENTY-ONE

My lover has gone down to his garden to the beds of spices, to browse in the gardens and to gather lilies. I am my lover's and my love is mine; he browses among the lilies.

Song of Songs 6:2-3

I want to share with you a story that came out of our CPR emphasis in 2006. This is Coach Richard Lee's story and is used by permission:

When Coach and his wife Pam were going through a difficult time, Coach's mother asked him, "Richard, does this have to do with sex?"

After picking himself up off the floor (who wants to think about their parents doing that???), he assured his mother that, "no, our problems are deeper than that."

Then out of curiosity (since his mother brought it up) he asked, "So, mom—you are in your



seventies now, do you and Dad, I mean, do you still...?"

To which she said, "YES!"

Taken aback but incredibly curious, Coach continued, "Well, how often?"


To which his mother responded, "4 times a week."

Still not getting enough of this, Coach pressed further, "when you were my age—with the stresses of kids at home and work and all that, did you do it as often then?"

"No, back then it was more like 6 or 7 times a week."

Now, if you're not so astounded that your pastor's wife just shared that with you—you may keep reading to hear how Coach Lee linked this to our CPR emphasis. He went on to tell us:

"My parents prayed together every single day of their married life. My father told me that he



never, not once considered another woman more desirable to him than my mother and was not ever tempted to stray from his marriage commitment. I believe that praying together = great sex. Trust me, I am going to pray with my wife every day!”

Hmm—I think I’m just going to let the Holy Spirit direct your prayers today!! ;)

CONGRATULATIONS! You’ve completed week 3 of the CPR challenge!

Write a note to your spouse!



WRITE YOUR HUSBAND A NOTE:



WRITE YOUR WIFE A NOTE:

Week 4

Sunday

DAY TWENTY-TWO

Thank God for what He continues to do in you. Ask the Lord to show you areas in your life where you need to rely more on him.



Monday

DAY TWENTY-THREE

"You have heard it said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Matthew 5:27-28

Husbands, do you have a problem with lust? Do you struggle with pornography? Ask God to convict you of any sins of lust you may have committed. Invite the Holy Spirit to replace your fleshly appetite with a spiritual hunger.

Wives, have you let yourself go? Do you demand that your husbands love you as you are—doing more to look good for yourself than for him? Invite the Holy Spirit to replace your self-worship and adornment with a genuine desire to adorn yourself for your husband.



Tuesday

DAY TWENTY-FOUR

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 2 Corinthians 5:17

Thank God for making you new! As partners in God's kingdom work, celebrate the fact that you are always being changed into the image of Christ. Ask God to keep your hearts tender toward one another as God transforms you both in His time and in His image (God is not transforming your spouse into the image you may have for him/her).



Wednesday

DAY TWENTY-FIVE

Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold!—2 Corinthians 3:12

Praise God for the eternal hope you both have in Christ Jesus. Pray for one another that God would make you bold in your witness and that He would give you someone to share your hope with today.



Thursday

DAY TWENTY-SIX

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.—2 Corinthians 4:8-9

Admit to God in the presence of your spouse—the specific things that might be crushing you today. Are you perplexed? Persecuted? Struck down? Agree with God's Word that though you may be feeling these things...you are NOT crushed, despairing, abandoned—and you will not be destroyed. Thank God for the promise of victory!



Friday

DAY TWENTY-SEVEN

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

2 Corinthians 9:15

Thank God for the day you asked Jesus into your heart. Be specific in your prayer so that your husband/wife can relive the day with you.

Saturday

DAY TWENTY-EIGHT

Enjoy this encouragement from Dennis Rainey
(www.familylife.com)

Prayer: The Secret to a Lasting Marriage
by Dennis Rainey

Please note: This is an archived Article.
References to conferences, resources, or other
special promotions may be obsolete.

Maybe you've had a similar experience with
your own spouse:

One night, my wife Barbara and I ended up in
bed facing in opposite directions.

Since early in our marriage, we have prayed
together each night before we go to bed. But
that night, I didn't want to pray with her. In my
conscience, however, Jesus Christ was asking
me,

"Are you going to pray with her?"

"I don't like her tonight, Lord," I replied.


"I know you don't," He said. "But you're the one who tells people that you pray with your wife all the time." Slowly, the Lord turned me over, and I said,

"Sweetheart, will you forgive me?" And Barbara and I talked and prayed.

I thank God for that tradition of prayer He has helped us build early in our marriage. I am not exaggerating when I say that Barbara and I might not still be married had it not been for daily prayer.

If there is one simple ritual I would urge couples to begin adopting in their marriages, it is this one—the habit of praying together every day.

When I was still a newlywed in 1972, I asked my boss and mentor, Carl Wilson, for his single best piece of marital advice. He and his wife had been married 25 years and had four children.




“Denny, that’s easy,” he said. “Pray daily together. Every night for 25 years we have prayed together as a couple.”

Since that day nearly three decades ago, Barbara and I have missed daily prayer fewer than a dozen times. That discipline has helped resolve conflicts, kept communication flowing, and, most importantly, acknowledged our utter dependence upon Jesus Christ as the Lord and Builder of our family.

Surveys at our FamilyLife Marriage Conferences indicate that less than 8 percent of all couples pray together on a regular basis. I suspect that less than 5 percent of all Christian couples pray together daily.

Let’s bring back a popular slogan from the 1950s: “The family that prays together stays together.” I believe that if every Christian couple would pray together regularly, our nation would experience a spiritual renewal of historical proportions, including a dramatic drop in the Christian community’s divorce rate.




And when the divorce rate drops within the church, we will see spiritual and moral awakening in America.

I want to challenge you to do something today: to commit to praying with your spouse for one week before you go to bed each night.

Please don't say you're too busy for this. Don't let time in front of the TV watching a ball game or a sitcom keep you from praying together. The average American adult watches 30 hours of television a week – and there has to be a little time in there to pray!

By the same token, don't let hobbies, singing in the choir, or working at the church keep you from praying together. It's easy to get busy—we all have a lot going on in our lives. But don't get so busy that you can't make the time to pray together with your spouse. Avoid living independently of one another. God gave you your spouse, and your marriage is the single most important relationship you have on this earth.




Of course, you'll have interruptions when you pray together. Anyone with a telephone, children or even pets can be guaranteed of that! But I encourage you to go past the interruptions. Time for devotion and prayer with your wife or husband is just too important.

When you pray together, you multiply your joys, divide your sorrows, add to your experiences with God together, and help subtract your haunting past from your life. During the rugged times of your marriage, you can share your burdens. Prayer can also take away the desire to get even and replace it with a willingness to work things out.

I urge you to make this commitment with your spouse. You may be afraid to start, and let me assure you, you are not alone. Many people are hesitant to start praying with their spouses. If this is the case, try saying this prayer: "Lord, teach me how to pray with my spouse. I'm afraid."

I can promise you; it will be one of the most rewarding things you will ever do for your marriage and for your family.



(Written by Dennis Rainey, co-founder of FamilyLife, a division of Campus Crusade for Christ. Reprinted by permission.)

CONGRATULATIONS! You've now completed 4 weeks!! That's an entire month of praying with your spouse!! YES! We are winning the battle for our marriages now!

Don't forget to reflect on your experiences this week by writing a note to your spouse.

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WRITE YOUR HUSBAND A NOTE:

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WRITE YOUR WIFE A NOTE:

Week 5

Sunday DAY TWENTY-NINE

Thank God for the time you've spent in prayer this past month. Ask Him to teach you the true meaning of love as you continue your prayer commitment this next week.

Monday

DAY THIRTY

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.—1 Corinthians 13:1

Take turns thanking God for the way your spouse has loved you. Be specific in recalling expressions of their love. Tell God how much you love your spouse. Invite Him to reveal more of what love means as you pray together this week.

Tuesday

DAY THIRTY-ONE

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

1 Corinthians 13:4-6

Repeat these verses in your prayer: Lord, Your Word says that...

When you have finished invite the Holy Spirit to show you which of these "is not's" that you have been guilty of. Ask for God's forgiveness for the ways you have behaved that have not been loving. Ask your spouse to forgive you for the harm you have done them because of your less than loving behavior.



Wednesday

DAY THIRTY-TWO

Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.—1 Corinthians 13:7

Husbands, ask God to give you wisdom, discernment, insight and courage so that you might be a great protector of your wife and your family.

Wives, ask God to increase your ability to trust your husband's love for you; and his ability to protect and provide for you. Ask God to increase your expressions of gratitude and encouragement toward him.

Thank God for the hope and perseverance He has provided in your marriage. Be specific in thanking Him for the difficult times He's been faithful to you.



Thursday

DAY THIRTY-THREE

Love never fails.—1 Corinthians 13:8

Think about that. Love never fails. Take time to thank God for His unfailing love. Ask Him to give you the same unfailing love toward one another.



Friday

DAY THIRTY-FOUR

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:13

Be honest before God and one another. Do you believe that love conquers all? Do you really want to do the hard work of loving one another? If so, tell God in a way that your spouse hears your commitment.

Saturday

DAY THIRTY-FIVE

Two S Words That Will Either Make or Break Your Marriage

Selfishness—I never knew I was selfish until I got married. Even then, I didn't know how selfish I could still get away with being until I had children!! By nature, we look out for ourselves. It is the sin nature within us that elevates ME, My and MINE to the most high place! I was at a ballgame of Tom's one time and I saw a little girl who was barely two. She rode in her chariot which was adorned with a lovely purple balloon. Her little friend (who was also two) toddled over to her looking at her balloon. She immediately grabbed the string on that balloon and glared at that boy! You're not touching my balloon!!

We come into this world with a desperate need to protect what is ours! SO—we look out for me—after all, if I don't look out for me who will?

This way of thinking goes in direct contrast to God's definition of love and marriage. In I Corinthians 13 God tells us exactly what love is—and what love is not. Review I Corinthians 13 by making two lists:

What love is:

What love is not:

Discuss these questions with one another:

1. How does selfishness choke love in marriages?
2. In what ways have you (husband) acted selfish in your marriage?
3. How have you (wife) acted selfish in your marriage?

What can each of you do to fight against serving self in your marriage?

Submission is a dirty word. When Tom and I first arrived at Thompson Station Church—we'd been married all of two years. The young women invited me to lead a Bible study on submission in marriage. I went straight to Ephesians 5 and boldly taught:

“When our husbands love us like Christ loved the church then it will be easy to submit to them!”

That was my catch phrase. When we first married, Tom and I fought biblically. He’d say “You’re supposed to SUBMIT to me!” I wanted to wash his mouth out with liquid Dial! But instead I hollered right back... “When you love me like Christ loved the church, I’ll be more than glad to submit to you!”

I was pretty safe with that prerequisite!! But—that’s not what Ephesians 5 says. Where I Corinthians 13 defines LOVE-- Ephesians 5:15-21 defines marriage. In these verses Paul tells us how marriage was created to work.

Wives, we may not “like” our verses, but look at our instructions compared to our husbands! Much responsibility is placed on him!

When you feel safe and accepted it’s easier to yield to your husband. I John 4:18 says, “perfect love drives out fear...” But these verses tell the

wife FIRST to submit - regardless of whether or not her husband loves her like Christ loved the church! What then?

Submission is:

- Allowing your husband to be the head of the home
- Discussing all decisions that affect the family BEFORE making them (finances, calendar and kids) and giving in if his desires conflict with yours.
- Taking your hands off trying to form your husband into the image of your "fairy tale prince in shining armor."
- Talking to God about him more than talking to him about God.

Submission is not:

- Exposing yourself and/or your children to abusive behavior.
- Keeping your desires/thoughts to yourself then stewing over them.
- Pouting, manipulating, complaining.
- Choosing to be satisfied with less than God's best for your marriage.

Remember MISERY is not an option!

Pray Together: Father—Your Word tells us that our hearts are deceitful and that You alone know what is in them because You search our hearts. We want You to search our hearts right now. We pray with David that You would “search me and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the everlasting way.” (Psalm 139:23-24)

Husbands you are the spiritual leader of your home. It is right for you to confess before your wife any selfishness you’ve displayed in your marriage. If God has convicted your heart of a specific time when you hurt your wife with your selfishness—ask Him to forgive you. Then, ask your wife to forgive you.

Wives—in Ephesians 5 where God defined the marriage relationship, He didn’t tell us to “love” our husbands but He did tell us to respect him. Have you been less than respectful to your husband? Have you belittled him in front of others? Have you refused to embrace a quiet

and gentle spirit? If so—ask God to forgive you. If He brings to your mind a specific time when you were not submissive, ask Him to forgive you for the hurt your lack of submission created and then ask your husband if he would forgive you too.

Close your prayer time by thanking God for His faithfulness and love. Read aloud I John 1:9
“If we will confess our sins, God is faithful and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Thank You Lord for forgiving us. Help us to

put away selfishness in our marriage. Help us both to submit to one another as (husband) I love my wife and (wife) as I respect and submit to my husband. Amen.

CONGRATULATIONS! You’ve now completed week 5!! You’ve done a great job!

Don’t forget to write a note to your spouse.



WRITE YOUR HUSBAND A NOTE:



WRITE YOUR WIFE A NOTE:

Week 6

Sunday DAY THIRTY-SIX

Thank God for the encouraging changes you've seen in your marriage since you and your spouse began praying together. Pray that you will continue to grow closer together and that you will prosper in the trials and difficulties you face.



Monday

DAY THIRTY-SEVEN

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.—Galatians 5:22-23

Confess to God that you can do nothing in your own strength. Choose to yield your old sinful nature to His new Spirit-filled nature. Ask God to produce fruit in you. Thank God for the evidence of specific fruits you experience in the life of your spouse.



Tuesday

DAY THIRTY-EIGHT

In Him, the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit.—Ephesians 2:21-22

Thank God for holding you together by the strength of His love. Thank Him for building you into a dwelling where He lives. Invite God to demonstrate His presence in how you live in relationship to one another.



Wednesday

DAY THIRTY-NINE

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. –Ephesians 6:10

Thank God for His mighty power. Acknowledge that your strength and your victory are found in Him. Invite God to prove Himself faithful in the commitment you've made these past few weeks and ask Him to seal this in your marriage as a discipline you will continue to embrace.



Thursday

DAY FORTY

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.—Ephesians 6:11-12

Don't forget that praying together is not simply about you and your spouse. It's not even just about what is best for your family. Choosing to pray with one another is about God's kingdom advance. You will change the world when you pray together! Renew your commitment before God now.



Friday

DAY FORTY-ONE

Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand!—Ephesians 6:13

Sometimes we win when we choose to stand firm. Tell God that even if the whole world chooses to be defeated by the schemes of the devil—the 2 of you will choose to stand firm! Claim victory for your home—and for our church.

Saturday

DAY FORTY-TWO


As we bring this emphasis to its conclusion—I hope you will continue to stand firm in your resolve to pray regardless and to allow God to be glorified in your relationship with one another.

Enjoy this—

Subject: Marriage & Patience

There was once a man and woman who had been married for more than 60 years. They had shared everything. They had talked about everything.

Nothing was held back. Well, almost nothing. They had kept no secrets from each other except that the little old woman had a shoe box in the top of her closet that she had cautioned her husband never to open or ask her about.



For all of these years, he had never thought about the box, but one day the little old woman got very sick and the doctor said she would not recover. In trying to sort out their affairs, the old man took down the shoebox and took it to his wife's bedside. She agreed that it was time that he should know what was in the box.

When he opened it, he found two crocheted doilies and a stack of money totaling \$250,000. Holy Moley! He asked her about the contents.

"When we were to be married," she started, "my grandmother told me the secret of a happy marriage was to never argue. She told me that if I ever got angry with you, I should just keep quiet and crochet a doily."

The old man was so moved, he had to fight back tears. Only two precious doilies were inside the box!

She had only been angry with him two times in all those years of living and loving. He almost burst with happiness.

"Honey," he said, "that explains the doilies, but.... what about all this money? Where did it all come from?"

"Oh," she said, "that's the money I made from selling the doilies." A women's prayer....

Dear Lord,

I pray for Wisdom to understand my man; Love to forgive him; and Patience for his moods.

Because Lord, if I pray for strength, I'll beat him to death!

Amen!

Congratulations! You've just completed the CPR challenge, well... almost. There's one more day! I hope you've enjoyed this prayer emphasis.

Write a note to your spouse and together come up with a plan to keep the both of you praying together.

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WRITE YOUR HUSBAND A NOTE:

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WRITE YOUR WIFE A NOTE:

Sunday

DAY FORTY-THREE

Praise God for what you've experienced and take a moment to thank Him for all that He has done! Ask God for help to continue the discipline of prayer in your marriage. Ask God to make your marriage as a beacon of hope for your family and friends, and all those you come into contact with.