

Creating a Prayer Menu

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

Ephesians 4:29

Prayer, the ability to talk to God, is super important to the overall health of a marriage relationship! There are tons of books and thoughts about prayer and also specifically praying as a couple. Here are 3 quick thoughts to cut through some of the confusion about couples prayer:

1. Deep Conversation = Deep Relationship: If conversation rarely goes beyond surface conversation about kids, bills, and what's going on at work (etc), then the couple's relationship itself will struggle to break beyond a surface level of connection.
2. Prayer = Spiritual Depth: Just as a couple had a 1st conversation when they met, which led to 2nd, 3rd & 4th conversations, until at some point feelings of love developed. Do the same with God. Start where you are and talk to God...and as a couple you will fall in love with Him.
3. Many Ways to Pray: **Most couples struggle to sit down together and pray.** Perhaps somewhere around 100% of Christian couples know they should pray together. However, far less than 10% of Christian couples actually pray together, regularly. So, create a Prayer Menu of the at least 9 ways to connect your marriage to God through prayer.

Well if deep conversation deepens our relationship, what can a couple talk about that's deeper than conversations about and with God? As I share throughout this course:

"Whatever you want to improve in your marriage, you first must seek it in heaven".

As you make prayer a priority of your marriage relationship, you will see your level of communication and intimacy deepen as a couple. So here then are 10 ways to connect your marriage to Christ through your own Prayer Menu:



Pray Aloud: This is the way that most couples think of prayer. They are typically in the same room and they verbally converse with God on behalf of the concerns of their marriage and each other. Some find reading a devotional or Scripture to be helpful to shaping what they will pray about. This is where we call on the name of Jesus for strength, not just for wants but for wisdom and guidance in our lives and marriage. It is where we line up with God.

Prayer Walk: Get out, go for a walk in the park or around the block, and pray while you walk. Let the focus be on God and not your spouse. Admire the beauty of God that surrounds you. Take note of the trees, how they bend and twist, how they differ from one to another. Marvel at the sun, which never rises late or sets too early. Notice the undulation of the earth and the uniqueness of birds. As you walk along, hand in hand, admiring God's handiwork, talk to God together. Thank Him for your spouse, thank Him for life, thank Him for your children or house, thank Him for salvation—just thank Him. As you mutually marvel at the vastness and lack of limitations to God's power and beauty, He might just put seemingly major parenting, relationship, or health concerns into perspective. So, go for a walk and pray.

Text a Prayer: For a while I resisted this one. But texting has become a viable and accepted way of communicating. For busy, two-ships-passing-in-the-night couples, sending prayers via text might help them to stay connected. One of the plusses of texting is that it naturally creates a record of what you have been praying about. So, when you have some down time, you can always go back and look at the thread of prayers that you have been sending each other. Texting prayers also can be a great point of re-centering in the middle of a hectic work day. Imagine being slammed at work and getting a text of your favorite Scripture or one that says, "I am praying God's blessings for you today." It has a way of bringing you close to each other, even when you are apart.

Exchange Prayer Requests: A little saying that I have developed over the years is, "If I guess I will get it wrong; if you tell me, I will know." One powerful way to pray together is simply to ask each other to name three things you can pray for on their behalf. For example, do you want to go back to school, lose some weight, pay off some personal debt, or make it through a difficult presentation at work? Exchange personal prayer requests with each other and as you do you will reinforce a sense of selflessness and togetherness in the relationship. Your commitment to pray with and for them says, "I care and I want to walk with you through the challenges of life." How many people are in our lives that volunteer to walk with us through the valleys of life? We want our marriage to be that place with that person where we can share the things that trouble us—things that we may not share with anyone else. What a way to intimately connect with each other as you open up about what you need. At the same time, God will move you closer to Him as a couple, as you see Him answer some of those prayers or redirect the course of your marriage.

Shared Activity/Service: There are projects all around us that need to be taken on. Get out of the house and find a project to do together. Work in a soup kitchen, help a single mother, mentor another couple, clean up a neighborhood eyesore—the possibilities are endless. Then, sit down and talk about how you saw God in your shared service unto Him. As Paul said in Acts 20:35 after ministering and serving Christ in Ephesus, *In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He*

Himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." We hear this passage often in reference to financial giving, but in context it is about serving others. Become intentional about giving to others in service, as a couple.

Silent Prayer: Create a quiet space, just the two of you, silently, internally praying. Prayer is so personal and sometimes praying audibly is uncomfortable. So pray in silence. You are together and God is in the midst of your silence as you pray for each other. He hears the cries of your heart, whether they ever reach your lips. Cuddle up on a couch, get quiet, and pray for each other silently. Your bodies are close, your hearts are tender, and God is in the midst.

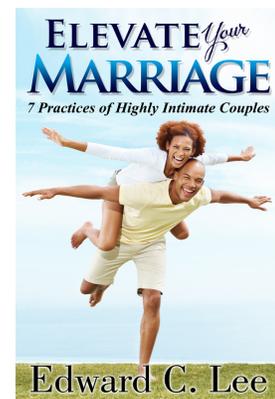
Prayer Notes: Write it down. A hand-written note becomes undeniably personal. Over the years, written prayers create a prayer history or dated timeline of what God has brought your marriage through. Sometimes the editing power of an eraser helps to make sure our prayer captures our heart. Be creative; write a prayer of thanks to God for your thoughtful husband or caring wife, then place it somewhere that they will find it later. Similar to texting, writing out your prayers leaves you with a written history of your prayers. Imagine being 50 or 60 years into your marriage and being able to look back on the prayers from the early years of your marriage.

Designate Prayer Times: We make time for what is important to us. So make prayer a priority and designate a time and a place where you will meet to pray. It instills a dual sense of commitment to bonding with God as a couple, both on earth and in heaven. These consecrated times become special meeting moments with God.

Declare a Fast: The next time you drive to work or church or go on one of your regular drives, count how many eating establishments you pass. You will be surprised! The point is that fasting, also known as "not eating," is counter-cultural. The fact that it is against the accepted or expected norm could very well be the point of fasting. We take a period of time to set aside the expected and to focus on God in prayer. God is never impressed by how long we can go without eating. Rather, it is the time we put back into our day, praying to God instead of preparing, cooking, eating, and then cleaning up, that captures His imagination. Take that time, as a couple, and seek the Lord.

Read the Bible Aloud: (New for 2022) Multiple places in the Bible it tells us by reading Scripture aloud we see the truth of ourselves as well as bless those that hear it (Jeremiah 36:3, Revelation 1:3, Psalms 1, Matthew 4:4). Take some time to read the Bible together, as it is. No need for interpretation, or having the right thing to say, just let it say what it says. Proverbs, the Psalms, John 1 - it's all really good, open the Word and bless your marriage.

This is not an exhaustive prayer list or, excuse me, Prayer Menu, so feel free to add your own as well. The idea is that *however* a couple communicates with God, their own marital communication is intimately strengthened. So just like when we go to our favorite restaurant and we begin to check out what's on the menu, we are not expected to eat everything on the menu, but we are expected to find something that we would like to try. Similarly, you don't



Modified from Edward's book,
Elevate Your Marriage

have to try all of these or even use the same ones every time; there is a whole *menu* of options that lead us to the wisdom of Christ. Different seasons of life might call for different ways to pray. Be creative. But by all means, please connect with God as often and as intimately as possible, to gain God's wisdom for *your* marriage.