

# How Do We Pray Together?

One of the most important things a husband and wife can do is to pray together as a couple. This can be intimidating if you have never prayed together. Here are some methods to pray together as a couple. Try each method until you find one (or a combination) that works for you.

- **Pray silently together.** All too often, couples believe that they are praying together only if they are praying out loud. Remember that the key is to intentionally pray together. When we are talking about this with couples' groups, we suggest that they begin by praying silently. Here are the guidelines: First, sit down together and hold hands. A number of couples have commented on how important it was to be touching each other as they prayed together. Next, talk together about some of your mutual concerns as a couple. Then, as you finish the conversation, one of you should say to the other, "Let's pray about these things." Finally, spend some time in silent prayer together. Whoever finishes first should squeeze his or her partner's hand as a way of saying, "I've finished." When the other person finishes, he or she squeezes back. Congratulations! You've just prayed together. After doing this for a time, you might say "Amen" out loud as you finish and squeeze your partner's hand, and then wait for him or her to say "Amen."
- **Finish silent prayer aloud.** The second way you can pray together is an extension of the way we have just described. It takes us a step further in becoming more open and more comfortable praying together. Instead of simply ending your silent prayer with a verbal "Amen," agree that after a squeeze of the hand, the other person will finish their silent prayer out loud. This does not have to be profound. Simply say something that expresses thanksgiving and praise for the knowledge that God is present with you and that he not only hears your prayers but also knows and hears the deeper needs of your hearts. Or thank God for being present with you, in both your time of conversation and your time of prayer.
- **Write out your prayer.** First, write out a short, simple prayer that is meaningful to you. Do this apart from your partner. Then come together and read your prayer to your partner. After you both have finished, you may want to discuss your positive responses to each other's prayers, and how it felt for you to hear one another talk to God. Or read together some of the prayers we have included at the end of each chapter.
- **Pray as you talk.** This approach to praying together simply means we back up in our conversation and consciously include God in the process. As a couple, you can simply stop in the middle of your conversation and suggest, "Let's pray a moment about this." If you're at the silent stage of praying together, pray silently about what you've just been talking about. If you are verbalizing your prayers, you can simply acknowledge that God is a part of your conversation. For example, when we are talking about a concern we have, one of us might simply say, "Lord, you are here listening as we talk, and we want to acknowledge your presence and ask for your help with this situation." Even this can be simplified, or the other person may add a sentence or two in prayer. We seldom say "Amen" when we do this—we just go back to our conversation. Over time, God's place within your conversation will become more natural, and you will become more aware of his presence.

- **Pray out loud, together, daily.** This is the same as our earlier suggestions, except that you are now comfortable enough with the process that you can verbalize your prayer in the presence of your spouse. In our questionnaire, we asked couples to tell us how they moved from praying silently together to praying out loud (meaning, was it difficult?). We wanted to know if couples talked about it beforehand, or if it just happened. We were surprised when a number of them such as the couple we mentioned earlier, replied, "We opened our mouth and said..." We laughed, but it really does boil down to that approach—opening our mouths and saying out loud what we are praying inside. Over the years, as we've become more comfortable with verbalizing our prayers together, we have expanded our evening prayer time to other times of the day. When we are together, one of us may feel the need to pray, so we stop and pray. It is more just a part of our conversation, even though we are still purposely stopping to pray together.
- **Practice "vulnerable" prayer.** This type of praying together is what we think most husbands (and some wives) fear is what we have in mind when we talk about praying together. It is difficult, and we certainly don't suggest starting this way. In vulnerable prayer, we pray about ourselves in the presence of our spouse. Along with praying "Lord, help us," or "Lord, help them," we pray "Lord, help me." When we pray this way, we are comfortable enough with each other that we can bring forward, with candor and honesty, our weaknesses, our failures, and our struggles, and talk openly with God in the presence of our spouse. This type of praying together is listed last, not because it is the best, but because it is the most difficult. Some couples may never pray this way, while others become very comfortable praying this way and feel that it is this type of praying together that really enhances their spiritual intimacy. Remember, however, the goal is not to pray vulnerably together; it is simply to pray together, consistently.

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