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a resource in:

**Marriage**

## Developing the Spiritual Union in Marriage



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# Developing the Spiritual Union in Marriage

**Directions:** Read through the verses and information below, allowing adequate time for discussion about each topic. The material below should not be considered exhaustive; rather, it should serve as a beginning point for you to search the Scripture and to learn more about marriage.

## I. SCRIPTURAL DIRECTION AND BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES.

### A. Marriage, as defined in Scripture, is God's plan and His idea.

Even prior to sin entering the world, God recognized and designed marriage to meet needs of men and women.

*Genesis 2:18-25, "And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."*

### B. God's image is revealed through both masculinity and femininity.

When God leads a husband and wife together, He is allowing them to see and reflect His image in a way unique to marriage.

*Genesis 1:26-27, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."*

### C. When God joins two people together in marriage, they are able to do more together than they could each do alone.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, a Christian husband and wife blend their lives together. This allows them to strengthen and help each other in ways that glorify God.

*Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."*

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## **D. Marriage is designed by God to reveal His glory to those who receive it as His gift.**

When husband and wife join together as one and establish a covenant between themselves and God, they are developing a spiritual union.

*Ephesians 5:30-32, "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."*

## **E. When the Word is read, spoken, and discussed in marriage, its power becomes evident.**

When a husband and wife share openly with each other on spiritual matters, it bonds them together and helps them keep God's Word as the basis for their marriage.

*Deuteronomy 6:4-9, "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."*

*Psalms 145:11, "They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power."*

*Malachi 3:16, "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name."*

## **F. When husbands and wives work together to serve others (as Christ modeled to us), the spiritual union is strengthened and helps the couple to maintain proper priorities in life.**

*Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."*

*Hebrews 10:24-25, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."*

*Colossians 1:10-12, "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."*

## **G. The husband and the wife need to continue to grow in their individual spiritual lives in addition to growing together spiritually as a couple.**

Helping one another to stay firmly grounded in Truth is a way that husbands and wives bless each other.

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*Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."*

*2 Peter 3:18, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."*

*Romans 15:4-6, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

*John 17:17, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."*

*Proverbs 27:17, "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."*

## **H. Times of challenge and struggle in life provide couples with the opportunity to draw closer to God and to each other.**

While Satan would like to use the stresses of life to harm your relationship, God can use difficult life circumstances to help you grow.

*Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."*

*2 Corinthians 4:16-17, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."*

*James 1:2-4, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."*

## **I. The stress and fast pace of life make it easier for couples to become distracted from their focus on Christ and the importance of maintaining the marriage relationship.**

Married couples need to make an intentional decision together to keep Christ at the center of their lives.

*Joshua 24:15, "... choose you this day whom ye will serve . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."*

*Colossians 3:23-24, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ."*

## **J. A couple's love relationship symbolizes the relationship between Christ and the Church.**

Therefore, He is glorified when couples express their love for each other. Couples need to see their physical union as an act of spiritual worship and obedience to God.

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*Ephesians 5:31-32, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."*

## **K. The health of the spiritual union is often reflected in a couple's priorities and goals in life.**

Giving of our time, money, talents, and other resources is an important spiritual practice for couples.

*2 Corinthians 9:7-11, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God."*

*Matthew 6:21, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."*

*Luke 6:38, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."*

## **II. PRACTICAL APPLICATION.**

### **A. Christ as the Head of the spiritual union.**

God desires that there be order in marriages and families. First, we must remember that this order was God's idea. As *1 Corinthians 11:3* says, "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."

Second, it is important that God's order be respected. As our creator, He knows how we are designed and under what conditions we will function best. Couples cannot violate God's order and then expect that things in their marriage are going to go well. The Word is clear that we reap what we sow (*Galatians 6:7-8*).

Third, note that Christ is the ultimate head of the union – not the man or the woman. This concept is important because husbands should never feel that they are "masters of the castle" or that they are "the boss." Rather, as *Ephesians 5:21* instructs both husbands and wives, married couples should be, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." Therefore, if Christian men are going to be effective husbands, they must first submit themselves fully to Christ. When they do this, their wives will find it much easier to respect and submit to them. Conversely, wives must be careful to not try to take the leadership role away from their husbands.

### **B. Your spiritual life.**

At times people ask each other the question, "How is your spiritual life?" How would you answer the question? This question means different things to different people. For example, some people think of their

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spiritual lives as the time that they spend doing their daily Bible reading and prayers. To be sure, daily Bible reading, meditation, and prayer are an essential part of the Christian life; however, your devotional time does not constitute your entire spiritual life. God wants us to live for Him in all areas of our lives. While quiet time with Him is precious and should not be minimized, no less important is being prayerful and connected with God when you are at work or in the home.

We should not live our lives in one way on Sundays and another the rest of the week. Rather, we should let our whole life be an offering to Christ and see each opportunity (and challenge) as an occasion to glorify Him and know Him better. The Apostle Paul's writings in *Philippians 3:10* expresses well the goal of our spiritual life, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." If our hearts and minds are Christ-centered, then our relationship with Him will impact all areas of our lives, including work, home, relationships, devotional time, priorities, and so on.

## C. Threats to spiritual oneness.

One of the ways to strengthen spiritual oneness is to work together to recognize and deal with things that threaten it. These threats will probably vary over time as life circumstances change. One should also note that not all of the threats to spiritual oneness are sinful or wrong in themselves. For example, while children are a blessing from the Lord, many couples find it more difficult to find time and energy to connect spiritually during the child-raising years.

The following is a brief list of threats to spiritual oneness for you to review. Each couple is encouraged to prayerfully consider and discuss this list and other issues, activities, and life experiences which may dull or harm their spiritual connection.

- The husband and/or wife not giving proper priority to their individual walk(s) with the Lord.
- Thinking that you will spend more time on spiritual things "tomorrow" or "when things slow down."
- Fear of being open with each other about spiritual things.
- Not working through differences in your convictions and beliefs.
- Not working on overcoming differences in your gender, personality, and how your families-of-origin dealt with communication about spiritual things.
- Not dealing with conflict and anger effectively in the marriage (*Ephesians 4:26-27*).
- The husband misusing his spiritual role in the home by either "being the boss" or through neglecting his role.
- The wife misusing her spiritual role in the home by either being unsupportive of the husband's role or by trying to take the lead.
- Defaulting to what comes naturally may be yielding to the temptations of self-interest, spiritual laziness, and independence, rather than making the effort to seek oneness after God's design.
- Becoming too busy to be able to maintain proper spiritual priorities in your marriage and family.

## D. Viewing marriage as a covenant.

Marriage is not merely a contract or an agreement between two people that lasts only as long as each party fulfills their responsibilities. Unfortunately, sometimes couples treat their marriages like a contract and then play the "50-50 game." That is, "I'll do my part if you do yours." How sad it would be if God treated us in this way! We would surely be miserable people if God loved us only when we "deserved" it.

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Marriage is much more than a contract; it is a two-way promise called a covenant. It is not only a covenant with our spouse, it is a covenant with God to fulfill our role as a spouse. Marriage was set up by God to be a covenant and an earthly representation of the intimate relationship amongst the Trinity and God's unconditional commitment to His redeemed. Recognizing the significance of the marital covenant is an important part of building the spiritual union.

## E. Leaving and cleaving.

The success of your marriage depends on your leaving (i.e., separating from) your parents and families-of-origin and cleaving to each other (i.e., creating your own family unit). *Genesis 2:24* says, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." As a couple, you are to love, respect, and relate to each of your families while also being separate and distinct from them.

## F. Promoting spiritual oneness by understanding each other's backgrounds.

Spiritual oneness grows when couples understand the effect of each other's family-of-origins and other differences (e.g., gender differences, personalities, life experiences) on the development of their spiritual union. Your individual family experiences and backgrounds helped to lay the groundwork for how you view spirituality in your marriage. For example, some individuals want to recreate what happened in their families while they were growing up, while others want to do the exact opposite of what they saw. You need to become aware of and openly discuss your differences and expectations in these areas.

Sometimes when dealing with differences in backgrounds, couples start from the position of seeing things as matters of "right and wrong." For example, while these words may never be spoken directly, a spouse's actions and attitudes may say, "The way my family did it is right. How your family handled it is wrong." However, while these feelings may be natural, they can also lead to misunderstandings and hurt feelings. It is much better to start from the perspective of trying to appreciate and learn from one another's differences. Following the scripture below will help you to have a Christ-like attitude in dealing with differences.

*Colossians 3:12-15, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful."*

Some practical suggestions for dealing with differences in your backgrounds include:

- Listen to each other carefully for the purpose of understanding each other well.
- Be flexible with each other.
- Be willing to learn from your spouse.
- Honor one another as children of God; equal before God, but with different complementary roles.
- Learn to distinguish between important issues which should be addressed and the many lesser differences which simply make life interesting.

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Below are some examples of gender, personality, and family differences that many couples must work through. Each couple is encouraged to prayerfully consider and discuss these issues and any others that may be applicable to their situation.

- Having differing levels of comfort when discussing spiritual issues and sharing thoughts and ideas.
- Having differing degrees of comfort in praying out loud.
- Having differing styles of reading and studying the Bible.
- Having differing convictions about some issues.
- Comparing your spouse to your mom/dad in a way that is critical of your spouse. For example, holding beliefs or saying things like, “A husband is supposed to be like \_\_\_\_\_, because that is how my dad was.” Or, “This isn’t how my mom always did it.”
- Note: Some problems related to spiritual oneness may actually be issues with gender differences, communication problems, incorrect attitudes, etc. For example, simply because a husband doesn’t get everything he wants doesn’t mean the wife is not being submissive.

## G. The significance of commitment.

Just as marriage involves a commitment to one’s spouse, it also involves a commitment to following God’s instruction. Developing the spiritual union means living out God’s Word in practical ways. That is, when husbands and wives look for ways to mutually love, respect and submit to one another, they are drawn together in a stronger union. This enhances the strengths that they individually bring to the marriage bond and encourages them to live overcoming lives.

### 1. Commitment to obedience.

*1 Peter 1:13-16, “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”*

- Demonstrate submission to those whom God has placed over you.
- Serve as an example of godly order to your children.
- Live under subjection to Christ’s authority. The husband is responsible to Christ for his family. The wife is responsible to Christ to submit to her husband. The children are responsible to obey their parents.

### 2. Commitment to service.

*Hebrews 10:24, “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.”*

- Recognize your spiritual union as being a part of the larger body of Christ.
- Develop and share a mutual sense of mission and service.
- Serve one another.
- Serve others.
- Support your local church and church activities together.

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## 3. Commitment to development and use of spiritual gifts.

*Ephesians 4:7, "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ."*

*Ephesians 4:11-12, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."*

- Recognize the value of all parts of the Body of Christ.
- Recognize the call for each individual to be used in the Body of Christ.
- Realize some spiritual gifts are more public (e.g., teaching, exhorting, etc.).
- Realize other spiritual gifts are less public and often get less attention (e.g., prayer, hospitality, serving, etc.). However, they are no less important than the more public ones!
- Help each other identify, develop, and use the spiritual gifts that God has entrusted to both of you.
- Encourage each other to overcome barriers to using spiritual gifts (e.g., fear of failure).

## 4. Commitment to good stewardship.

(See the parable of the talents in *Matthew 25:14-30*.)

- Be aware that materialism and the pressure to "get ahead" financially cause many couples to falter.
- The pursuit of wealth, status, and personal enjoyment should not outweigh the pursuit of holiness, knowing God more deeply, and service to others.
- Make tithing of your resources and giving of your time and talents a regular practice in your marriage. Tithing is an act of faith, love, devotion and obedience to the Lord's work.

## 5. Commitment to forgiveness.

*Luke 11:4a, "And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us."*

- Marriage will allow many opportunities to practice forgiveness.
- Jesus' guidance on the need for ongoing forgiveness is especially important for couples. In *Matthew 18:21-22* it says, "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."
- Forbearing one another and practicing forgiveness (*Colossians 3:13*) with one another is a way of admitting that you each are human beings who make mistakes and need to accommodate each other.
- Forgiveness should not be used to excuse sin, but rather to heal hurts and to avoid "keeping a record of wrongs" in a marriage.
- Make your marriage a living example of grace as you bestow forgiveness to one another.

## 6. Commitment to prayer.

*1 Thessalonians 5:17, "Pray without ceasing."*

- Praying together is a way to build intimacy as husband and wife draw closer to one another and to God.
- Prayer can be incorporated into the marriage in a variety of ways individually, as a couple, and as a family.

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## 7. Commitment to raise children in a godly way.

*Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."*

- Both husband and wife have a responsibility to provide for children spiritually.
- Model Christ-likeness in both words and actions.
- Your lifestyle and priorities in life should point your children toward Christ.
- Teach obedience and respect for those in authority.
- For fathers: *Ephesians 6:4, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."*
- For mothers: *Proverbs 31:26, "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness."*

## H. Developing and encouraging appropriate spiritual roles.

Complementary spiritual roles (leadership and submission) were designed by God to exist together and to reinforce each other. They can only be adequately lived out when they exist together. For example, submission implies the existence of a leader who does not contradict or attempt to override Christ's leadership. The husband and wife must each strive to live out their spiritual role in the marriage so that the spiritual union can develop.

### 1. Husbands:

- Discover practical ways to dwell with your wife according to knowledge and with understanding (*1 Peter 3:7*).
- Recognize the submission involved in loving your wife as Christ loved the church (*Ephesians 5:25*).
- Remember the leadership role in the home has more to do with lovingly taking responsibility (i.e., servant-leadership like Christ modeled to us) than being "in charge" and having the last word (*John 13:4-17*).
- Serve as a daily prayer warrior for your family.
- Pray out loud with your family at least one time per day.
- Understand spiritual leadership as both an attitude/mindset and a set of actions. For example, as mentioned in the previous bullet point, husbands should pray out loud with their families. At the same time, a husband who believes that praying before meals is all that he has to do to be the spiritual leader in the home is quite mistaken.
- Remember that your wife has a great need to feel cherished by and connected to you. *1 Peter 3:7* instructs us, "*Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*" If you are not being understanding of your wife's emotional needs, your spiritual effectiveness will be diminished.
- Strive to meet the emotional needs of your family. While not natural for some men, meeting emotional needs is a very important role to fulfill. Not meeting your wife's/children's emotional needs makes it very hard for them to give you respect.
- Understand the husband as the spiritual head sets the standard for his family's spirituality. However, this does not mean that the husband is more spiritual than the wife.
- Realize that just because you are the husband does not automatically mean that you are functioning as a leader.
- Considering your wife's input in decisions is a practical way to love your wife and to practice mutual submission (*Ephesians 5:21*).

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## 2. Wives:

- Look for practical ways to submit to your husband as the spiritual head as you submit to Christ as the Head of the Church.
- Remember that your husband has a great need for respect and honor from you.
- Be aware that your attempts to be “helpful” to him may be interpreted as criticism. This doesn’t mean that you should never give your husband suggestions! Rather, when you share your thoughts and ideas, do so in a loving way.
- Identify your husband’s comfort with being a leader. If he is insecure or passive in his role as the spiritual leader, be sure to compliment him and provide him with positive feedback when you see him trying.
- Find ways to live out the role as a helper that is suitable (*Genesis 2:18*). It is a privilege for you to be able to complement (i.e., balance, supplement, strengthen) your husband’s role.
- Don’t underestimate the power of prayer in your marriage. Your role as a prayer partner in the marriage can be just as vital and effective as that of your husband.

### I. Discovering what works best for you as a couple.

As a given, each husband and wife is encouraged to be reading the Word (*Psalms 1:1-2*), constant in prayer (*1 Thessalonians 5:17*), consistent in attending church (*Hebrews 10:25*), and devoted to serving the Lord and others (*Matthew 5:16*). While most couples understand the importance of regular spiritual activities like these, figuring out how to regularly practice them together can be difficult.

*NOTE: Each couple is encouraged to find what works best for them as a couple. Not all couples will (or should) do this the same. As long as the right “ingredients” are being used, each couple has latitude to find the right “recipe.”*

#### Givens

#### Some options for how to regularly incorporate it in your marriage

#### *Reading and meditating on the Word*

Read together at bed time.  
Do a Bible study together regularly (daily, weekly).  
Go through a devotional book (your elder may have suggestions).  
Pick a topic to study separately, study it, and then come together to discuss what you learned.  
Read with your spouse and your family after meals.  
Memorize Scripture verses together.

#### *Prayer*

Pray aloud together at bed time.  
Together, set a day of the week to pray for certain topics.  
Share prayer requests with each other about what things are on your heart or issues you are facing in the upcoming week.  
Agree to pray for some of the same things in your private prayer.  
Schedule family prayer time (daily, weekly, monthly).

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## *Church attendance and fellowship*

After church services, share what you learned from the sermon.  
Initiate the forming of a potluck group.  
Participate in a rotating potluck.  
Make a list of people in your church that you don't know well and then, one-by-one (or couple by couple), invite them over to get to know them better.  
Commit to visiting other Apostolic Christian churches.  
Establish specific personal or couple friendships for sharing and accountability.

## *Serving*

Bring meals to people who are going through a stressful time.  
Serve on a committee at church together.  
Use your unique gifts and skills to help others.  
Tithe regularly and commit together to support the Lord's work.  
Visit the elderly, widows/widowers, orphans; help single parents.

### **III. COUPLE QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES.**

#### **A. Questions and issues for you to discuss.**

1. What does the fact that marriage was instituted by God before the fall of man into sin say about marriage?
2. How sure are you of your salvation?
3. Do you think it is easier to ask for forgiveness or to grant it? Why? How can we make both aspects of forgiveness recurring factors in our marriage?
4. How are we doing at "leaving and cleaving"? Are any things hindering us from being distinct from either of our families-of-origin?
5. What is our understanding of marriage as a covenant?
6. If someone was watching our marriage and looking for signs of spiritual oneness, what would they notice?
7. For husbands: Does being a leader come naturally for you? What are the differences between spiritual leadership and domination? What are the differences between spiritual leadership and being passive or absent in that role?
8. For wives: Does submission come naturally for you? What are the differences between biblical submission and trying to take over leadership from the husband? What are the differences between biblical submission and being easy to "run over"?
9. If we ever have questions about (or difficulty with) connecting spiritually, who would you be willing to talk to for advice on growing in this area?

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## B. Couple exercises.

1. Share with one another your testimony of how you came to the Lord.
2. Read the entire chapter of *Ephesians 5*. Note the whole context of the chapter. Discuss how you see the husband's and wife's roles in marriage. How are they interconnected?
3. Identify a mature, Christian couple that has been married for at least 25 years. Talk to them about the role of spirituality and spiritual oneness in their marriage. Ask them questions about how they communicate about spiritual things and what works (and doesn't work) for them as a couple.
4. Individually, read through each incomplete sentence below and write out how you would complete it. Compare and discuss answers with your spouse.
  - a. To me, God is \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. To me, church is \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. The time I felt closest to God was \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. The time I felt most distant from God was \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. One way I need my wife/husband to help me spiritually is \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. To me, prayer is \_\_\_\_\_
  - g. When I think about God, I feel \_\_\_\_\_
  - h. In my home or family, religion is \_\_\_\_\_
  - i. To me, God always \_\_\_\_\_
  - j. To me, God never \_\_\_\_\_
5. Below is a list of issues for wives to pray about specifically for their husbands. This list isn't exhaustive; rather, it's a starting place for the two of you to develop a more personalized list of topics. Husbands, take the list of what your wife is to pray for you about and add specifics under each item. For example, what "choices" are you facing currently that your wife could lift up in prayer?

### Pray for your husband's:

Occupation	Health	Stress
Temptations	Safety	Past issues
Mind and emotions	Trials	Attitude and outlook
Fears and worries	Integrity	Obedience to God
Purpose	Reputation	Self-Image and identity
Sexuality	Goals and priorities	Servant leadership
Choices and decisions	Relationships	Vision for the family
Spiritual growth	His role as a father	Future

## Developing the Spiritual Union in Marriage

6. Below is a list of issues for husbands to pray about specifically for their wives. This list isn't exhaustive; rather, it's a starting place for the two of you to develop a more personalized list of topics. Wives, look at the list of what your husband is to pray for you about and add specifics under each item. For example, what "desires" do you currently feel most strongly and how could your husband lift those up in prayer?

Pray for your wife's:

Work	Obedience to God	Health
Temptations	Self-image and identity	Safety
Emotions and mind	Submission and trust	Trials
Worries and fears	Attitude and outlook	Virtue
Purpose and meaning	Desires	Beauty
Sexuality	Stress	Goals and priorities
Choices and decisions	Past issues	Relationships
Spiritual growth	Future	Her role as a mother

# Developing the Spiritual Union in Marriage

## References:

Referencing of these materials is not meant to imply an endorsement by the Apostolic Christian Church of America of the author, publisher, or organization that created the materials.

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1. Adapted from Stormie Omartian, *The Power of a Praying Wife* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1997).
  2. Adapted from Stormie Omartian, *The Power of a Praying Husband* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2001).

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