

# Praying Together



**Karen Holford**

*Karen Holford and her husband, Bernie, serve in the South England Conference Family and Children's Ministry Departments. They will celebrate their silver wedding anniversary in December 2008. They are qualified family therapists and have two adult children and a teenager. Karen loves to quilt and Bernie loves to fly kites. Karen is the author of 100 Creative Prayer Ideas for Kids—and Grown Ups Too! which has been published by Pacific Press.*

**B**ernie was still a seminary student when we were first married. I had led out in student ministries, and we had both served in all kinds of public ministries, speaking, praying, and even singing. We had also prayed together from the start of our friendship. But soon after we were married, we found it harder and harder to pray together as a couple. We soon discovered that praying as a couple is quite different from praying in front of a congregation or praying privately. We struggled and felt guilty that it was so hard at times, especially since we were a ministry couple. But as we talked to mature ministry couples, we discovered that ours was a fairly common experience.

Praying together is challenging for most couples, and ministry couples are no exception. Before marriage, prayer has often been a private and personal experience; learning to pray together as a couple can feel strange at first. And because most of us have never seen another married couple pray together, we have no role models to follow. But persistence will help you find the best way to pray together. Prayer helps you stay close to your spouse, as well as to God, and invites you into a deeper level of love and intimacy. God's Holy Spirit helps you to know what to

pray for and how to pray together. Be open to listening to how the Spirit wants to work with you both as you develop your relationship with each other and with God.

## **Questions to think about and discuss together:**

- ♥ What are my concerns about praying together?
- ♥ What might be my spouse's concerns about praying together?
- ♥ What might help make it easier for me to pray with my spouse?
- ♥ What might make it easier for my spouse to pray with me?
- ♥ How might God use prayer to help us grow closer to Him and to each other?

If your spouse doesn't feel ready to pray with you yet:

- ♥ Show him/her gentle kindness; it is the Holy Spirit's job to prompt, not ours to push.
- ♥ Prayer is a way of showing concern for others. Ask your spouse what he/she would most like you to pray for, and then only pray out loud about what he/she has requested.



- ♥ Avoid behavior which could leave your spouse feeling discouraged or spiritually inferior, as this can distance you from each other. Remember that the aim of your prayer time is spiritual intimacy with God and with each other.

## Ideas To Enrich Your Couple Prayer Experience

### Silent hands prayer

This is one of the simplest of all prayers. Talk together for a few minutes about your prayer concerns, praises, and thanks. Then hold hands and silently pray for your spouse. Squeeze hands after a few moments and say “Amen” together. It can feel so good to know that someone else is praying for you, even if you can’t hear the words.

### Praise

Praise is so central to our relationship with God. It changes our perspective on God, our lives, and our experiences. Praising God together is one of the easiest ways to strengthen your spiritual connection with each other. Take turns praising God for different things until you have listed at least 10 praises.

### Sentence prayers

Prayer should be simple. Try praying one sentence at a time, and then let your spouse pray one sentence. You might follow the ACTS (Adoration, Confession, Thankfulness, Supplication) model of prayer and pray one or two sentences each for each section of your prayer together. As you get used to the idea, you can pray one sentence at a time but increase the number of sentences you pray under each section.

### Prayer book

Keep a journal of thankfulness to God. At the end of each day, think of everything you want to thank God for and write these items in a small diary. In the morning, sit down together and write down the concerns you each have for the day. Promise to keep praying for each other through the day. If you get up at different times, take time

the night before to write a card for your spouse with your personal prayer requests for the day. When you get up and start your day, take your spouse’s prayer card and pray for him/her as often as you can.

### Prayer notice-board

Use a bulletin board or magnet board (even a fridge door will do!) to create a prayer notice-board, with a collage of prayer requests, praising thoughts, thanks, cards, photos, texts, answers to prayer, and any other clippings. If you like being creative, make a beautiful prayer scrapbook together.

### Conversational prayer

In conversational prayer, each person prays a few sentences and then stops to let the other person pray. Try to follow each other’s ideas and link your prayers together as if you were having a conversation with each other and with God.

### Prayer cards

Buy some index cards in four different colors. Assign one aspect of prayer to each color (for example, yellow = praise, blue = confession, green = thanks, and pink = prayer requests).

Each of you can take a few cards of each color and write different sentence prayers according to the color-coded theme of the card. Lay the cards out together on the floor in rows of different colors and take turns reading the cards aloud as you pray together. Alternatively, lay the cards out and read them silently together while holding hands. Or shuffle the cards and deal them into two piles. Take a pile each and arrange them into a prayer sequence. Read each prayer aloud to each other.

### Blessing each other

Try praying a simple blessing on each other when you part and meet and get up and go to bed. Create your own words and traditions for doing this, such as kissing each other on the forehead or hand before you say the words. Or create a special blessing gesture or signal so that you can secretly bless each other in public or show that you are praying for each other. Try Numbers 6:25; 2 Corinthians 13:14; or 1 Thessalonians 5:23 as simple blessings.

### Be specific

Be as specific as possible when you pray for each other, and rejoice together when prayers are answered, even if the answers are not what you hoped they would be. It can be helpful to take a broad and eternal perspective on answers to prayer, remembering that God works all kinds of things into His plans even though situations sometimes look quite messy to us.

### Confession

Prayers of confession may be best prayed in private until you feel ready to share together. If you’ve upset your

spouse in any way, then praying for forgiveness from God in your spouse's presence may be quite healing. Be careful that your prayers are not used to hurt your spouse, and be aware of the importance of praying humbly, so as not to spiritually intimidate the other person. There may also be a place for confessing to each other the wrongs you've done to others and for being accountable to each other and to God in finding ways to handle difficult relationships.

#### **Prayer reminders**

Carry a small item that will remind you to pray for your spouse when you are apart, such as a button, piece of ribbon, or small significant and symbolic item.

#### **Daily prayer menus**

Instead of praying for your entire prayer-request list every day, try grouping your prayer lists in some way, and pray for one category at a time. One day you may pray for your family members; another, colleagues and work issues; the next day, overseas issues and workers; the next day, local church and community issues, etc.

#### **Prayer times**

Pray for each other at a specific time every day. Set an alarm on your watch, mobile phone, or electronic diary. Perhaps you could text or e-mail your prayers, or pray together as an online MSN conversation if you are apart.

#### **Prayer consequences**

Write out your prayers on pieces of paper and pass them back and forth, adding a sentence at a time and folding over the top of the page. Follow the same sequence of themes and prayer requests and then read each prayer aloud as you pray together. Each prayer has then been created by both of you.

Depending on their unique styles of expression, their interests, their culture, and their spiritual experiences, couples can find different ways to pray. Take time to discover the best way to pray together. The Holy Spirit longs to help you develop this special relationship with each other and with God.



*“We should study the Saviour’s parables where He spoke them, in the fields and groves, under the open sky, among the grass and flowers. As we come close to the heart of nature, Christ makes His presence real to us, and speaks to our hearts of His peace and love.”*

—Christ’s Object Lessons,  
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