



Prayer Tip: Pray With Other People. (From: [The All-Time 10 Best Tips on Prayer](http://www.themarriagelibrary.com/Resources/10-Tips-Prayer.pdf) by Jim Stephens, www.themarriagelibrary.com/Resources/10-Tips-Prayer.pdf)

This is hard. It takes a commitment and it requires us to become vulnerable. It means that we are opening up our very personal thoughts and desires in prayer to someone else. However, the rewards are far, far greater than the price.

As two people each draw closer to God in prayer, they are simultaneously growing closer to each other. Think of it as a triangle with God at the top and those praying on opposite ends of the base. As they each move closer to God, then they have in fact moved closer to each other also.

One of the times that I feel the closest to my wife and children is after we have been praying together. I'm not talking here about the brief prayer that we have as a family every morning before school or the bedtime prayer at night. For us, those are just short prayers like saying grace before we eat. These we rotate every day. Everyone takes his or her turn. The deep closeness I'm referring to are the times when we pray together for a longer time or take the time to share the more personal side of ourselves with each other.

You may have heard the saying "the family that prays together, stays together." This is not just a slogan, but experiential truth because you will be intimately sharing your lives with each other.

When praying together, it is important that each person that is present be a participant. No one should be left out. If only one person prays, then there often isn't the "horizontal" give and take that makes a base for everyone to experience God. In the Bible it mentions that wherever two or more are gathered, then God can be present. But in my experience this doesn't just mean two bodies in the same location. It means that the spirits of two or more people are participating together.

There are a number of ways you can do this. One suggestion is an ongoing 12 minute prayer each day. Alternate who prays first each day and say just a prayer from your heart. The person who goes first prays for a while and then stops. Then the other person prays. If the 12 minutes is not up, then the first person prays again. This continues until the time is up.

You don't have to set a time limit on it, but I recommend giving at least 12 minutes to your prayer life. By the end you can feel good that you have accomplished something. Praying less time might become one of those "hurry-up and get it over with prayers" (if you know what I mean). Prayer brings us closer and often we might find ourselves sitting together afterwards and sharing our hearts for quite a while. It's also a good time to talk about the children or catch up on other important family business.

I recommend setting a time limit because you can feel a completion point and a sense of accomplishment and be able to measure your progress a little better. If you really get into the prayer, there is no reason to stop of course when you get to the time limit. (I didn't really have to say that, did I?)

Another technique is that each person prays for one point or one subject only. Then the next person prays for a different point. Then rotate to the next person or back to the first person again if there are just two. This works well if you are using a prayer list or are in a larger group.

You could also try having each person just pray one sentence and the next person pray a sentence. Let your creativity work a little. If you have more than two people, then you can make a circle and do the same things as above.

One more quick point on praying with others. This one is rather obvious. Who should you choose to pray with? Naturally, pray with your family members and loved ones. I also suggest that whenever possible, find other people that are more experienced at prayer than you are that you can pray with. Look for the opportunity to pray with established groups. I have no doubt that they would welcome you, especially if you make it known to them that you are a beginner and want to learn. Not only will these people be a great support system through rough times, but also you can learn about prayer more quickly through their "mentoring" than going it alone.



10 Things You Can Do To Have a Healthy Marriage

National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, (continued from last week)

It takes work to have a healthy marriage like it takes work to do anything. You can't maintain a house or a car, be successful in a business, art or a sport, take care of a pet, or grow a plant without making effort. The greater effort you put in, then the more rewarding is the outcome. Why do so many people think that a great marriage is something you just "fall into" and like magic it's the perfect relationship?

It takes good nutrition and regular exercise over a long period of time to have a healthy body. Likewise, there are things you can do to have a healthy marriage.

Here are 10 Tips you can use to strengthen your marriage (continued from last week):

5. Explore Intimacy. (see full text for this point)

6. Explore Common Interests. (see full text for this point)

7. Create a Spiritual Connection. (see full text for this point)

8. Improve Your Communication Skills.

The ability to talk and listen to each other is one key to a healthy marriage. You should never assume your partner knows what you are thinking or feeling. Tell your spouse what is going on—and as a spouse, know when to simply listen. Learning to really hear your partner is a skill that may require practice. There are many resources available like books, marriage education workshops and online courses. All of these options can help couples learn how to communicate more effectively. Tell your spouse what is going on - and as a spouse, know when to simply listen.

9. Forgive Each Other.

If he or she hasn't already, your partner is going to do something that hurts, frustrates or upsets you. Guess what, you are going to do the same thing! Sometimes it might even be on purpose after an argument or misunderstanding. Forgiveness is a tricky but important virtue in a marriage especially since no one is perfect. Try to allow your partner some room to make a few mistakes because you will also make some of your own. When you make a mistake, act quickly to apologize and fix problems. Doing so will help to encourage forgiveness and strengthen your marriage.

10. Look for the Best in Each Other.

When you met your partner, you fell in love with some of his or her wonderful qualities. Over time however, your view of those qualities may have changed. For example, he may have been really good at saving money when you met. Now you just think he's cheap! Give each other the benefit of the doubt and create a list of all the things you love about your partner. It will help you to fall in love all over again!

Thank you to David Jones, a Certified Family Life Educator and author of a variety of relationship tools for fathers, for contributing to this tip sheet.

Full text available at: www.TheMarriageLibrary.com/Resources/10Things.pdf

Parenting Tip

Comment:

We highly recommend this book on positive parenting: **Children Are From Heaven**, by John Gray.

Jim & Hiromi Stephens,
District 1, Marriage & Family
Ministry

This is the final installment,
continued from the last 4
weeks...

Again here are the 5 key
messages:

- 1. It's okay to be different.**
- 2. It's okay to make mistakes.**
- 3. It's okay to have negative emotions.**
- 4. It's okay to want more.**
- 5. It's okay to say no, but remember mom and dad are the bosses.**

Putting the Five Messages into Practice

Parenting has always been a challenge, but positive parenting is an even greater challenge. Although it takes extra time and effort in the beginning to learn, it is well worth it. In the long run, not only does parenting become easier, but your children benefit as well.

By giving your children the freedom to discover and express their true selves, you give them the gifts of greatness.

All great individuals, thinkers, artists, scientists, and leaders in history were able to say no to past conventions and to think creatively. By means of the process of saying no to others or resisting common ways of thinking and not blindly conforming, then creativity and greatness can emerge.

Each of the five messages of positive parenting supports the development of a strong

sense of self and contains special gifts of greatness.

They are:

1. Permission to be different, which enables children to discover, appreciate, and develop their unique inner potential and purpose.

2. Permission to make mistakes, which enables children to self-correct, learn from their mistakes, and achieve greater success.

3. Permission to express negative emotions, which teaches children to manage their emotions and develop a feeling awareness that makes them more confident, compassionate, and cooperative.

4. Permission to want more which helps children develop a healthy sense of what they deserve and the skill of delayed gratification. They are able to want more, and yet be happy with what they have.

5. Permission to say no, which enables children to exercise their will and to

define a true and positive sense of self. This freedom strengthens children's mind, heart, and will and develops a greater awareness of what they want, feel, and think. This permission to resist authority is at the basis of all the positive parenting skills.

I hope this practical parenting guide helps you be the best leader for your child.

Being a parent is difficult, but as we all know it is the most rewarding job one can have.

Compliments of the District 1
Marriage and Family Ministry,
FFWPU

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