

The Power of a
PRAYING
HUSBAND

STORMIE
OMARTIAN



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All the stories related in this book are true, but most of the names have been changed to protect the privacy of the people mentioned.

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HER HUSBAND

I once saw a football game where the home team was losing and there were less than 15 seconds left in the game. They needed a touchdown to win, but everything was against them making a score in that amount of time. The game appeared to be over, and the opposing team and fans were already celebrating. Some people were even leaving the stadium. But the losing team and coach didn't give up or let their morale fall. Instead they pulled an unlikely play out of their book, and through the most astonishing sequence of events, the home team made a winning touchdown in the last few seconds of the game. It was so amazing that news reports of it even referred to it as a miracle.

Your marriage is like that football game. You and your wife are a team. And she wants the security of knowing that when things are tough and down to the wire—even when the enemy is already celebrating your demise and all appears to be lost—you have the faith to believe that up to the very last second everything can turn around. She needs the assurance you have a play in your pocket that can take you down the field with the ball for a possible winning score. She wants you to trust that with God nothing is impossible, and because of that you will never give up hoping for the impossible to happen.

When your wife knows you are praying, she is confident of all of these things.

In my survey of wives, 85 percent of them said the most important prayer their husband could pray was that he would become the man, husband, and head of the home God wanted him to be. This is the most important place for a man to begin praying.

“THAT YOUR PRAYERS MAY NOT BE HINDERED”

The good thing about prayer—or the problem with prayer, depending on your perspective—is that we have to go to God to do it. This means we can’t get away with anything. It means that any negative thoughts, bad attitudes, hardness of heart, or selfish motives are going to be revealed by the Lord. Fervent and honest prayer causes the depths of our hearts to be exposed. That can be uncomfortable. Even downright miserable.

If there is one thing I have learned about prayer, it’s that if we have any unforgiveness, bitterness, selfishness, pride, anger, irritation, or resentment in our hearts, our prayers will not be answered. “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear” (Psalm 66:18). Our hearts have to be right when we pray. We all—men and women alike—jeopardize our own prayers when we don’t pray them from a right heart.

What is in our hearts when we pray has more effect on whether our prayers are answered than the actual prayer itself. That’s why, when we come before Him to pray, God asks us to first confess anything in our hearts that shouldn’t be there. He does that so nothing will separate us from Him.

The Bible says, “Husbands, likewise, dwell with them *with understanding*, giving *honor* to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being *heirs together* of the grace of life, that your *prayers may not be hindered*” (1 Peter 3:7).

Part of dwelling with your wife *with understanding* means recognizing that your wife is in need of your covering, protection, and love. And because you are *heirs together* of God’s grace, you need to *honor* her in your thoughts, words, and actions. When you don’t, your *prayers are hindered*. This means *all* of your prayers, not just those for your wife. Many men have not seen answers to their prayers because they have not learned this key step. One of the best ways to honor your wife is to pray for her from a heart that is clean before God.

Ask God to show you whatever you need to see about the condition of your heart. You may have the perfect marriage and be sublimely happy, and still be less than what God wants in your attitude toward your wife. Whatever He reveals, confess it to Him. Once we confess our less-than-perfect attitudes to the Lord, He helps us get beyond them. You’ll find that the most difficult part about being a praying husband will not be the amount of time it takes to pray for your wife—rather, it will be praying with a heart that’s right before God. That’s why praying for your wife must begin with praying for yourself.

Don’t worry, God taught this same principle to the praying wives. Many women told me that it was at this point in the chapter they threw the book across the room and said, “Forget it! I’m not doing that!” Of course the Holy Spirit wouldn’t let them get away with that for long, and so they eventually picked the book back up and kept reading. So if you would like to throw this book across the room and say, “Forget it! I’m not doing that!” this would be a good

time to do it. I know you'll pick it back up again, because you're going to get awfully tired of your prayers not being answered.

IT TAKES TWO TO MAKE ONE

When God created Adam, in spite of all the greatness that was in him God knew he still needed a companion, a helpmate who would fit with him, be a complement to him, and complete him (Genesis 2:18). So He created Eve. In spite of all the greatness that is in you, dear brother, God made your wife to be a complement to you and make you complete. You do the same for her.

God says that when you and your wife were married you became one flesh (Genesis 2:24). Isn't it amazing that we were created to be one with our mates? That feels possible when we start out. There is the *anticipation* of oneness in that first moment when you sense you were destined to be more than friends. There is the *sense* of oneness in the courtship. The *promise* of oneness in the engagement period. The *declaration* of oneness in the wedding vows. The *thrill* of oneness on the honeymoon. The *excitement* of oneness as a home is established. Then somewhere along the way, the oneness gets eroded by a subtle separateness.

How does that happen?

The answer is the world, the flesh, and the devil. The world creeps in, along with raising children, pursuing careers, and dealing with the busyness of life. We begin to find more fascination or distraction in *it* than we do in our mates. Our flesh takes over when we decide to be self-centered instead of self-sacrificing. Then there is Satan.

God created marriage at the beginning. Satan has been trying to destroy it ever since. You and your wife are created

in God's image (Genesis 1:27). Satan wants to make you over into *his*. Satan doesn't want your marriage to succeed and has in fact set up a plan for its destruction. He is even now making plans to destroy your marriage. But you, my precious brother, have been given the power and authority to put a stop to this through your prayers. When you pray for your wife, it keeps the world at bay, it transforms selfish hearts, and it derails the devil's plans. If God has asked you to pray for your enemies, how much more does He want you to pray for the person you are supposed to love and with whom you have become one? But first you have to pray for *yourself*.

FIVE WAYS TO BE THE HUSBAND GOD WANTS YOU TO BE

In the Bible, God commands, "All of you be of *one mind*, having *compassion* for one another; *love* as brothers, be *tenderhearted*, be *courteous*" (1 Peter 3:8). Paying heed to these five directives can change your life and your marriage and make you the man and husband God wants you to be. It's definitely something well worth praying about.

1. BE OF ONE MIND

It's horrible to have strife in a marriage. It makes us miserable. It affects every area of our lives. And it's probably the closest thing to hell we'll ever know on earth. If it goes on long enough, it can destroy everything. Jesus said, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand" (Matthew 12:25). Those are frightening predictions. But prayer is the key by which unity in the marriage relationship can be maintained.

A man and wife cannot live entirely independently of one another without paying a steep price for it. It makes them incomplete. “Neither is a man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:11). But because men and women are different, it’s quite easy for them to get off onto completely separate paths. Even in the closest of marriages, the two partners are still not joined at the hip. You and your wife may have separate work, interests, and activities, but if you are praying with and for one another regularly, it will keep you in tune and on the same path. Without this unity of mind and spirit that prayer provides, it’s too easy to get used to the other one not being there. And if resentment about that creeps into the heart of either one of you, you can begin to hold yourself apart from one another mentally, physically, or emotionally, without even realizing it.

It is especially important to be of the same faith and beliefs. In fact, this is a good place to begin praying. Your entire relationship is compromised if you are not on the same page in this area. For example, going to separate churches, or going to a church where one of you is not happy, or one of you going to church while the other one consistently does not, all promote a lack of unity.

If you can think of other issues such as this that have caused division between you and your wife, pray specifically about them. Ask God to change your heart where necessary to bring you into unity with your wife. Where your wife’s attitude and perspective need to change, pray for her to be able to change them. Your marriage will be a strong force for good if the two of you are of one mind.

2. BE COMPASSIONATE

Have you ever seen your wife suffering, but you don't know what to do about it? Some men become impatient with that. Others feel so at a loss or overwhelmed by it that it causes them to withdraw. If you recognize that happening to you, ask God to give you a heart of compassion. To be compassionate toward your wife is to have a deep sympathy for any area in which she suffers and to have a strong desire to alleviate that suffering.

Part of being compassionate has to do with simply listening. That means being able to listen without having that faraway look in your eyes that says, "I have more important things to do. Let's get this over with quickly." Your wife is not expecting you to fix everything. She just needs to know that you hear her heart and care about how she feels.

In the past my husband would stand still and listen to me for no more than three seconds (I timed this) before he would walk out of the room. If I wanted him to hear a complete sentence, I either had to run after him or finish the sentence the next time I saw him. Even when I did get him to actually sit down and look at me while I was speaking, I still had to ask him to give me some indication that he comprehended what I was saying. Usually I said something like "Blink if you can hear me." When he blinked, it meant so much to know he had heard my voice. Now he has a heart for my struggles, and he listens with care. Those moments of listening and indicating compassion have been healing to our relationship.

Pray that God will give you a heart of compassion toward your wife and the patience to listen to her when she needs you to do so. It's a fine art worth cultivating. It can get you places with her where you've dreamed of being.

3. BE LOVING

Jesus loves us with fidelity, purity, constancy, and passion no matter how imperfect we are. If a man doesn't love his wife in that same way, he will abuse his authority and his headship and as a result will abuse *her*. Because you are one with your wife, you must treat her the way you would your own body. You wouldn't do anything to deliberately hurt or destroy it. You love it and care for it. "Let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself" (Ephesians 5:33).

Jack Hayford, our pastor for 23 years, always said he could tell when a woman was truly loved by her husband, because she grew more beautiful as the years went on. He recognized an inner beauty that doesn't fade, but rather increases with time when a woman is loved.

You have no idea how much your love means to your wife. Don't withhold it from her, or one way or another you will lose her. The Bible says, "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do so" (Proverbs 3:27). Ask God to increase your love for your wife and enable you to show it in a way that makes her beautiful.

4. BE TENDERHEARTED

Is there anything about your wife that bothers you? Is there something that she does or says, or *doesn't* do or say, that irritates you? Do you find yourself wanting to change something about her? What happens when you try to *make* those changes occur? How does she respond when you show your irritation? Have you ever just given up and said, "It's no use. She's never going to be any different"?

The truth is, we all have a hard time changing. Try as we may, we can't change ourselves in any significant way. Only God can make changes in us that last. Only *His* power can transform us. That's why prayer is a more tender and more certain way to see changes happen in your wife.

For example, does your wife always run late, while you like to be on time? She's probably not doing it on purpose. She may either be a poor judge of time or else she is trying to do too much. Pray that God will help her to organize things better or not take on more than she can handle, or that she will gain a clearer concept of time. Above all, don't let anger, harshness, or demeaning attitudes creep in. Criticism intended to make your wife change doesn't work. It will never give you the results you want. The only thing that works is prayer.

So rather than be impatient with your wife's weaknesses, ask God to give you a tender heart so you can pray for her about them. Ask Him to show you how they are a complement to your strengths. And remember that, though the ways you and your wife are the same can unite you, the ways you are different can keep things interesting.

5. BE COURTEOUS

Do you ever talk to your wife in a way that would be considered rude if you were speaking to a friend or business associate? Are you kind to everyone all day at work, but then you take out your frustration, exhaustion, and anger on your wife when you get home? Do you ever allow criticism of your wife to come out of your mouth in front of other people? If so, as a sister in the Lord who deeply cares about both you and your wife, allow me to give you your first serious assignment in this book:

STOP THAT!

Marriage is hard enough without one of the parties being rude, cruel, or inconsiderate. Nothing makes a marriage feel more like hell on earth. Nothing is more upsetting, defeating, tormenting, suffocating, or emotion-provoking, nothing does more to bring out the worst in us, than a marriage where one of the partners is lacking in common courtesy. I have heard of more marriages dissolving because the wife had been treated rudely for so long that she felt herself becoming resentful, angry, bitter, and hopeless. In other words, she was turning into the kind of person she never wanted to be. We have to care enough about our mates to stop doing things that hurt or upset them.

There is nothing more wonderful than the male voice. It is strong and deep and rich. And the sound of male voices singing together is one of the most beautiful sounds on earth. But the male voice can also be terrifying, especially to women and children. Most men have no idea about the power of their voice. When a man speaks, his words have the power to create and the power to destroy. His words can be like a sharp knife that wounds and kills, or a soothing balm that heals and brings life.

I'm not saying that you shouldn't talk honestly and openly with your wife about the issues in your lives. By all means, put your thoughts and feelings on the table. But don't let your words turn into weapons of criticism that destroy what you want to preserve. Even when we don't mean to, our impatience or exhaustion can make our words seem less than courteous. Remember that "the kingdom of God is not in word but in power" (1 Corinthians 4:20). It's not the words you speak, it's the power of God behind them that will make the difference. Praying first, *before* you talk about a sensitive subject, will give your

words power and ensure that you speak them from a right heart.

Your wife was created as a gift from God to complete you. “Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man” (1 Corinthians 11:9). But she must be treated as the gift from God that she is, in order for that complete blessing to happen in your life. Your wife will prove to be your greatest asset if you value and honor her. The Bible tells us that “whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight” (1 John 3:22). Pray for God to help you speak to your wife in a courteous way that is pleasing in His sight, and to convict your heart when you do not.

Praying about these five simple biblical directives will transform your life and your marriage. And no matter how great your marriage is, God wants it to be better. Since God tells us to “be transformed,” that must mean there is always room for improvement (Romans 12:2). Therefore it stands to reason that, as we improve individually, our marriages will also improve. Next to your love for her, the greatest gift you can give your wife is your own wholeness. Her most fervent desire for you is that you become the man God created you to be. It must be your desire also. God has given you strength, brilliance, power, authority, and the wonderful and admirable traits that come with being a man. Ask God to help you use them well and to His glory. Ask God to make you everything He created you to be so you and your wife will always be a winning team.

SHE SAYS...

Please pray for yourself that:

1. You will be the husband God wants you to be.
2. You will know how to really love your wife.
3. You will be led by the Holy Spirit in all decisions.
4. You will be delivered from negative behavior.
5. You will speak words that build and not destroy.
6. You will have the desire to pray for your wife.
7. You will grow spiritually, emotionally, and mentally.

HE SAYS...

BY MICHAEL OMARTIAN

Michael is a record producer and songwriter. He and Stormie have been married for 28 years, and they have three grown children.

I just heard the sad story of yet another woman who lived in a marriage where she had to endure the overbearing actions and declarations of her husband. It has ended in a divorce. It was a marriage in which her opinions were not valued or needed, and she was made to feel disrespected, unloved, powerless, and useless. The worst part is that such things are happening alarmingly often even in Christian marriages. The reality is that many men have been taught strange interpretations of portions of the Bible. These misinterpretations have been spread through ignorance and because of some men's need to feel powerful as the "priest" of the home. No wonder the feminists have had a field day.

Although some women have been hurt and damaged through the extremism of the women's liberation movement, I can certainly see how it got started. We men can do a much better job of loving our wives as Christ loved the

church. I know *I* can, and I pray that I will. I believe that through prayer God will give us men the tools we need so we can regard our wives with great respect and affection and become the instruments of support that they need.

Christ died for the church. We need to ask God to help us rise to the standard He has for us so that we will consider our wives before ourselves. That way our marriages can be a very different story.



PRAYER POWER

Lord, create in *me* a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me (Psalm 51:10). Show me where my attitude and thoughts are not what You would have them to be, especially toward my wife. Convict me when I am being unforgiving. Help me to let go of any anger, so that confusion will not have a place in my mind. If there is behavior in me that needs to change, enable me to make changes that last. Whatever You reveal to me, I will confess to You as sin. Make me a man after Your own heart. Enable me to be the head of my home and family that You created me to be.

Lord, show me how to really cover (wife's name) in prayer. Enable me to dwell with her with understanding and give honor to her so that my prayers will not be hindered (1 Peter 3:7). Renew our love for one another. Heal any wounds that have caused a rift between us. Give me patience, understanding, and compassion. Help me to be loving, tenderhearted, and courteous to her just as You ask me in Your Word (1 Peter 3:8). Enable me to love her the way that You do.

Lord, I pray that You would bring (wife's name) and me to a new place of unity with one another. Make us be of the same mind. Show me what I need to do in order to make that come about. Give me words that heal, not wound. Fill my heart with Your love so that what overflows through my speech will be words that build up, not tear down. Convict my heart when I don't live Your way. Help me to be the man and husband that You want me to be.

POWER TOOLS

A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH...LET EACH ONE OF YOU IN PARTICULAR SO LOVE HIS OWN WIFE AS HIMSELF, AND LET THE WIFE SEE THAT SHE RESPECTS HER HUSBAND.

EPHESIANS 5:31,33

ONE WHO TURNS AWAY HIS EAR FROM HEARING THE LAW, EVEN HIS PRAYER IS AN ABOMINATION.

PROVERBS 28:9

HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES, JUST AS CHRIST ALSO LOVED THE CHURCH AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR HER.

EPHESIANS 5:25

CONFESS YOUR TRESPASSES TO ONE ANOTHER, AND PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER, THAT YOU MAY BE HEALED. THE EFFECTIVE, FERVENT PRAYER OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN AVAILS MUCH.

JAMES 5:16

HUSBANDS OUGHT TO LOVE THEIR OWN WIVES AS THEIR OWN BODIES; HE WHO LOVES HIS WIFE LOVES HIMSELF. FOR NO ONE EVER HATED HIS OWN FLESH, BUT NOURISHES AND CHERISHES IT, JUST AS THE LORD DOES THE CHURCH.

EPHESIANS 5:28,29