

The Power of a
PRAYING[®]
Couple

STORMIE
OMARTIAN



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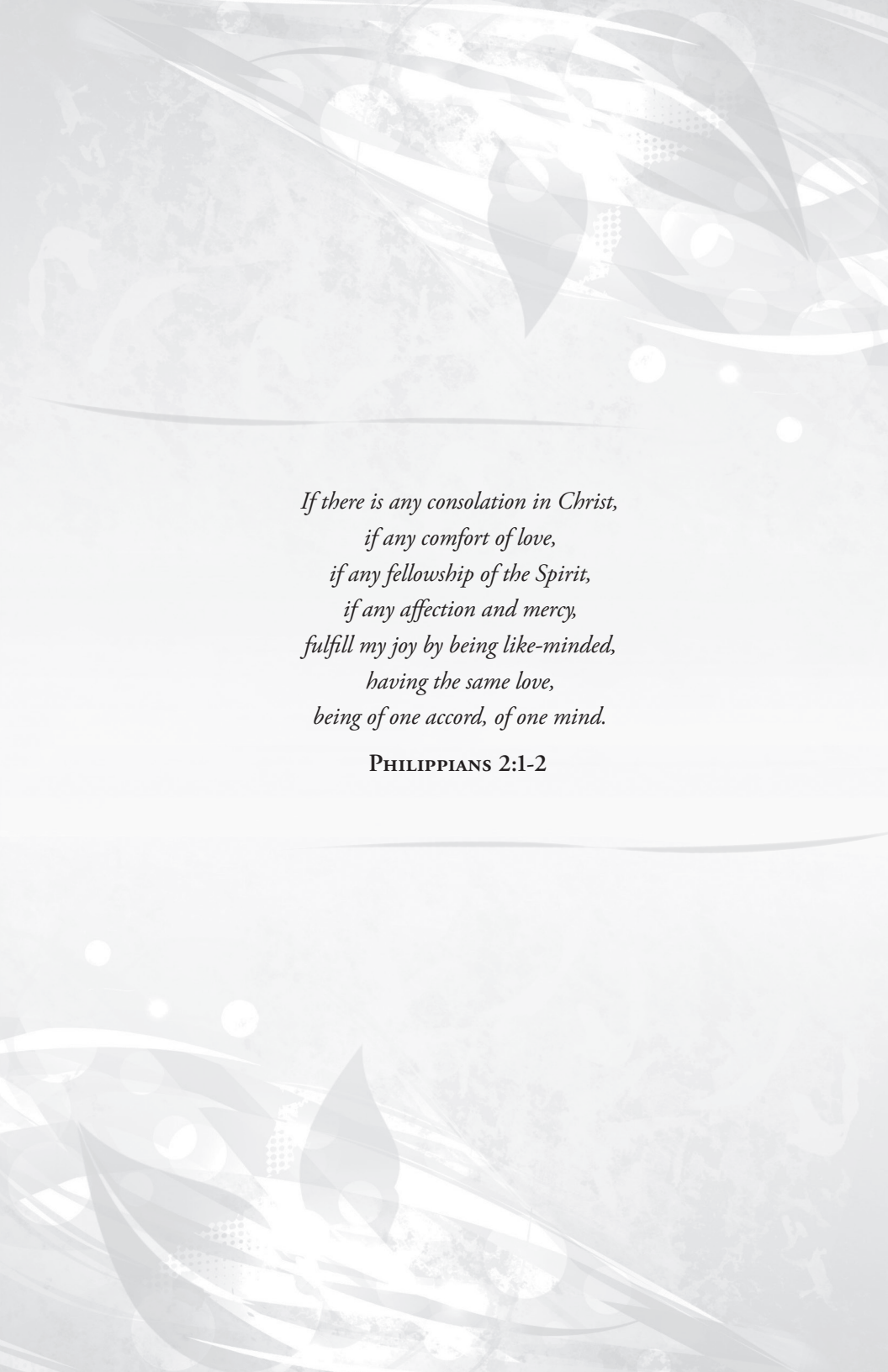
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*If there is any consolation in Christ,
if any comfort of love,
if any fellowship of the Spirit,
if any affection and mercy,
fulfill my joy by being like-minded,
having the same love,
being of one accord, of one mind.*

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-2

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With much love,

Stormie Omartian

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Before You Begin...

After my husband, Michael, and I were first married, I found that praying together...out loud...in front of one another...was a little awkward. I was a new believer, and he had been a Christian for years before that time. So he had more experience with prayer than I did. We had met at a recording session several years before because I was a singer and he was a musician. I had been called to do this session by a good friend of mine, Terry, who I knew was a strong believer. And *I* knew that *she* knew I wasn't.

She was the recording contractor for many of the sessions I did, so I appreciated that she had mercy and not judgment toward me. At that particular session, Terry told me in advance that the session would be all Christian music, and I would be the only one there who was not a Christian. "But you will enjoy the people," she said.

She was right. I did.

All the people there—including engineers, musicians, singers, songwriters, the conductor, and the producer—were warm, kind, and welcoming. Because we were doing an entire album, the recording session was three days long, so I got to know the people on the session somewhat—especially Michael, the piano player. He and I talked on our breaks and lunch hours, and we realized we

had many things in common. But once this session was over, we didn't meet any further because he was a believer and I wasn't. I'd heard he didn't want to date anyone who wasn't a Christian, and I wanted nothing to do with dating anyone who *was*. My mother always claimed, "*I am child of God*" as if no one else on earth was. And she could sound crazy at times when she talked about God. As it turned out, she was severely mentally ill, and she was physically and verbally abusive to me growing up, so I didn't want to marry anyone remotely like that.

The only reason I sort of knew what a believer was like was because Terry often talked to me about her church, her pastor, and her faith, and what it meant to receive Jesus as her Savior. I thought, *How nice that is...for her*. In fact, I thought, *This really works for these people. They are genuinely kind, and they all have a special spirit about them*.

Little did I know.

All of it was fascinating to me because I thought of myself as coming from a Christian family even though my mother only went to church Christmas Eve and Easter morning, and she was not consistent with that. My father always stayed home. He said he'd already had enough church to last a lifetime. Growing up, I thought that was all there was to being a Christian.

We had a huge family Bible that gathered dust in our living room, but it was never opened much that I know of, except for the few times I caught my mother reading it late at night. Every now and then I opened it myself, but I couldn't understand it. The last time I saw that Bible was when my mother angrily picked it up, went out the back door, and threw it in the backyard, where it landed in a muddy patch. I had just become a teenager, and I knew enough to not want to be in her way when she came back into the house. I ran to my room and kept very quiet the rest of the night. I never saw that Bible again, but when I came home from school the next day, it wasn't outside in the mud anymore.

Do You Find It Easy to Pray with Your Husband or Wife?

If you said yes to that question, that is a very good thing. It means you both have enough spiritual maturity and faith in God to believe He will hear your prayers and will answer. Not everyone has that.

About a year after I met Michael, Terry saw I wasn't doing well, so she took me to meet her pastor. I was open to what he told me—that if I received the Lord, He would change me from the inside out. This pastor said God had a purpose for my life, and He would help me find it. I had never heard anything like that before. So I received Jesus in his office. Terry was there with me, and she invited me to church that Sunday. I said yes.

I found it was a great and growing church that emphasized teaching people how to read and study the Bible consistently, how to worship God wholeheartedly, and how to pray powerfully and purposefully—not only on our own but also with other people. I also sensed the presence of love, peace, and joy in a way I had never experienced before, and it was palpable. It was real. I soon found out it was the presence of God.

Almost every time the church gathered for a service, 15 to 20 minutes was devoted to turning to two or three other people, joining hands and introducing ourselves by our first name, and then sharing a prayer request we wanted others to pray about for us. For example, “My name is Maria, and I would like prayer that I can find healing for my injured back.” Or, “My name is Jason, and I would like prayer that I can find a better job.”

They were simple requests and simple prayers, but those first circle times were difficult for me. Of course, if you had never done this before and didn't feel comfortable praying out loud, you could just say you were new at this and wanted to listen to the others pray this time. Still, you were encouraged to at least say what you wanted prayer for. But the more you were in those prayer circles, and the more you began to see answers to your prayer requests,

the easier it became to be an active part of them. Your faith grew until you eventually felt able to pray for someone else.

As time went on, those once-dreaded prayer circles became something I looked forward to. In fact, on certain gatherings when there were several things that needed to take place during the church service, the pastor sometimes didn't have time for the prayer circles, and many of us were disappointed. For a number of us, that was the only time anyone ever prayed for us, and we felt sad when we missed this opportunity.

I saw Michael again when he started coming to this church, and not long after that we began dating. We were married about a year later. Michael and I started praying together at home, but I found that to be harder than I expected. It was because I needed to get over being concerned about whether I was praying as eloquently as the pastors did or like other people who were more experienced at it than I was. I had to understand that I was simply talking to God and did not need to impress anyone. I had to be honest with God about what I was seeking from Him, and to be grateful to know what He expected from me—honesty, humility, and love. He wanted me to have faith that He heard my prayers and would answer in *His way* and in *His time*.

I learned that praying is not telling God what to do. He knows what to do. But He wants us to come humbly before Him, communicating our love for Him, and then telling Him exactly what concerns our heart and what we would *like* Him to do.

All this is to say please do not feel uncomfortable or intimidated when praying with your husband or wife. No one is expecting you to sound like Billy Graham or Mother Teresa. Actually, there should never be any judgment on one another's prayers. There should be only gratefulness to God that you have a husband or wife who is willing to pray with you.

Think of it this way: Prayer is simply talking to God—humbly, honestly, respectfully, faithfully.

The more you and your spouse pray together, the more comfortable you will feel praying out loud with each other. When you pray the prayers in this book together, each prayer is already written out so you don't have to think of everything. And yes, those prayers count even if you haven't thought of them yourself. It's the same as when you sing a worship song someone else wrote. It's powerful for you as long as you believe the words you are singing or saying.

The prayers I have written for you both to pray are about subjects every couple needs to cover in their marriage. It can be hard to remember everything you need to pray about. These prayers can be complete in themselves, or they can be a starting point as you each continue praying about the specifics of your lives. And I pray you will do that.

The subjects in these chapters are not an assumption that you have these problems, but I'm assuming you never *want* these things to become a problem. Ask God to help both of you to be on the same page. Some couples may discover they are not only not on the same page—they feel they are not even in the same book. But God is the great unifier. He wants us to communicate so well with Him and together with our spouse that we grow in better understanding of each other. And rather than having a standoff over something, you can decide instead to stand together in prayer and ask God to help you find a meeting place—no matter what the subject is.

In order to be in the same book, you both need to make God's Word—the Holy Bible—the most important book you are in together and individually. It's important to be in agreement about His truth. Let *that* book, and this one, be a kind of insurance policy for your marriage. Divorce is expensive—in so many ways.

The truth is, you have a better chance of staying together if you pray together often. But we all want to not only *stay together* in our marriage. We also want to be *happy together*. In order to have

all that, we need to be in agreement. That doesn't mean we are clones of one another. It means there are certain subjects we *do* agree on. And we can pray about the rest. We can pray that God will *help* us to have oneness and like-mindedness, having the same Lord and being of one accord and of one mind. Unity!

And He will.

Maintaining a Right Heart

When you are first married, you have *soft* and *loving* hearts toward each other. (Otherwise, why get married?) So what can happen to change that? How do soft, loving hearts become separate or distant? How do they grow cold, hard, or indifferent? Where do things start to go wrong, and how can you prevent that from happening? I believe it's because we start to care *less* instead of caring *more* about each other. We neglect to *care fully* for our husband or wife. Instead, we appear to *care less*. Perhaps we don't notice how distracted we have become with our busy lives until we stop making our spouse a priority. Then unity of purpose is lost, and we grow apart and not together.

The good news is God has given us keys to unlock our hard hearts and open them back up to His love flowing through them. One of those keys is praying together in unity. Another is reading or hearing the Word of God. Jesus said, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19). "Keys" here is talking about the authority Jesus gives in His name to believers who receive Him and love Him. We understand more and more about how the power

to bind and loose is to be used as we pray and read His Word. In this instance we are talking about taking authority over our heart and maintaining it in a right way. It's about forbidding ourselves from even thinking an evil thought. When we pray like that, we can stop something bad from happening that we know shouldn't be. Or we can set ourselves free from some distraction that we have allowed to come into our life and take precedent over our relationship with our spouse. The sooner we pray about such things in unity, the quicker they can be corrected. Of course, wonderful distractions come into our lives that we must never neglect—such as children—that demand our time and focus. But we must make sure we don't neglect our husband or wife in the process of raising them. That will never work well.

If you or your husband or wife ever find yourself with a heart growing cold toward the other, remember that it starts with a heart that has already grown cold toward God. You can keep that from happening by praying together often and specifically asking God to keep your hearts soft toward Him as well as toward each other. The Bible says, "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but whoever walks wisely will be delivered" (Proverbs 28:26). God never sees the hardness of our heart as being okay. And if we allow it to become that way, it's our fault. We always have a choice. When we deliberately stay close to God in prayer, praise, and in His Word, His Holy Spirit in us keeps our heart soft toward Him and toward each other—if that is what we wholeheartedly desire.

Some of the other words the Bible uses to describe this unity are "being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord," not being selfish or conceited, not thinking of ourselves more highly than the other, and not only looking out for our own interests. We must be looking out for our spouse's interests as well (see Philippians 2:1-4).

Pray that each of you will have a heart that is entirely open to God's truth and never open to the lies and enticements of the

enemy of your marriage. Ask God to take away all pride in either of you if any arises because that always leads to a hardened heart. Remember that unity is always worth the effort it takes to work toward it. The two of you praying together in one accord will cause your prayers to be more powerful in their effect than you ever thought possible.

His Prayer

Lord, thank You for my wife. Thank You for Your love for her and for me. Teach us to love each other the way You love us. Thank You for putting a new heart and a new Spirit within us.

I pray You will always give me a heart that is soft toward my wife and take away any hardness of heart I have allowed to move into my thinking or feeling. Reveal any pride in me or anything I am not seeing in myself that does not please You. Help me to stay close to You because Your Spirit of love in me keeps me in line with Your will. Give each of us a heart that longs to know You better. Deepen our closeness to You as we pray together and live according to Your Word. Make us strong in faith, and give us ears to hear whatever You are speaking to us. Give each of us a *sound heart* because that brings new life (see Proverbs 14:30). If our hearts ever begin to grow distant or distracted, give each of us a *renewed* and *refreshed heart* of love for one another.

Thank You that You have given us the keys of Your kingdom of heaven so we can pray and stop things from happening that shouldn't be, or free ourselves from things we have allowed in our lives from which we want to be free. Teach us to use Your keys in prayer so that we will maintain a sound heart toward You and toward each other.

Lord, You have said that when we marry we leave our father and mother and form a new unity. Teach us to always remember that so we will make each other our greatest priority and form that unity You want between us.

In Jesus' name I pray.

Personal Prayer Needs

Her Prayer

Lord, I am grateful to You for my husband. Thank You that You brought us together for Your purpose. Teach us how to glorify You in the way we treat each other. Help us to bless You with how we bless each other. Thank You for calling us to be close to You, for that is our desire as well.

Lord, I pray that You would take away any hardness I have allowed to move into my heart. I know You never approve of that. I also know my heart and mind cannot be trusted to always have Your will in the center of them. Help my husband and me to pray together daily and to stay in Your Word so that we are fed with Your truth. Lead us by Your Spirit to obey You at all times and in every thought. Where either of us becomes selfish, wake us up to Your truth that any pride in our heart will lead us to a great fall. Teach us to daily look out for, and care for, one another.

Give both of us hearts that are continually renewed in Your Spirit so that we never allow ourselves to lose a right attitude toward You and Your ways. Keep us from assuming that our hearts are always right toward You and toward each other. Keep us from trusting in our own heart and becoming distracted away from You and each other. Help us to walk wisely so we will be delivered from that kind of creeping separation. Whenever it seems we are beginning to drift from one another in any way, give us a new heart and a new spirit within us as You have said in Your Word.

In Jesus' name I pray.

Personal Prayer Needs

TRUTH TO AGREE ON

Fulfill my joy by being like-minded,
having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.
Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit,
but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others
better than himself.
Let each of you look out not only for his own interests,
but also for the interests of others.

PHILIPPIANS 2:2-4

A man leaves father and mother,
and in marriage he becomes one flesh with a woman—
no longer two individuals, but forming a new unity.

MARK 10:7-9 MSG

The heart is deceitful above all things,
and desperately wicked; who can know it?

JEREMIAH 17:9

Let us not grow weary while doing good,
for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

GALATIANS 6:9

I will give you a new heart
and put a new spirit within you.

EZEKIEL 36:26