NOTE-TAKING EDITION

The Power of a PRAYING® Wife

STORMIE OMARTIAN

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This book is dedicated with love to my husband, Michael, who has consistently given me more than I ever wanted to pray about. You and I both know that prayer works.

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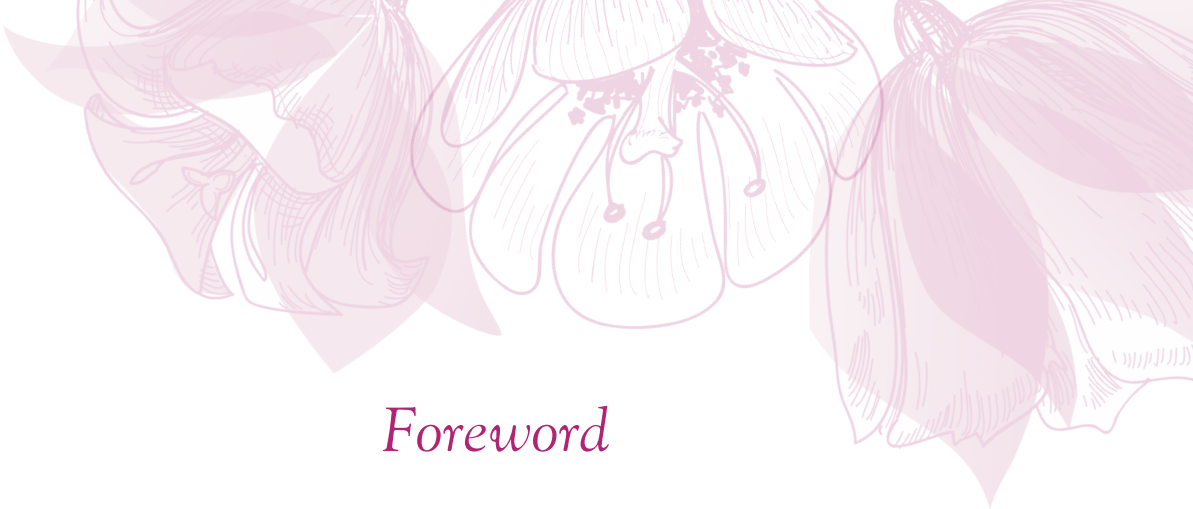

Foreword

There is a joke in our household when I refer to the number of years Stormie and I have been married. I always say, "It's been fifty wonderful years for me and fifty miserable years for her." After fifty years of marriage to Stormie, there aren't any phases of my complex personality left for her to discover. She has seen me triumph, fail, struggle, be fearful and depressed, and doubt my competency as a husband, father, and musician. She has seen me angry at God because He wouldn't jump when I asked Him to. She has witnessed miracles, as God redeemed something from the ashes to gold. Every step of the way has been accompanied by her prayers, and this book was written from her experience over the years. I cannot imagine what my life would be without her praying for me. It gives me comfort and security, and also fulfills the mission the Lord has for us to pray for each other and bear one another's burdens. I can think of no better way to truly love your husband than by lifting him up in prayer on a consistent basis. It is a priceless gift that helps him experience God's blessings and grace.

Stormie, I love you.

Your covered-in-prayer husband,
Michael

Who can find a virtuous wife?
For her worth is far above rubies.
The heart of her husband safely trusts her;
so he will have no lack of gain. She does him
good and not evil all the days of her life.

Proverbs 31:10-12

The Power

First of all, let me make it perfectly clear that the power of a praying wife is not a means of gaining control over your husband, so don't get your hopes up! In fact, it is quite the opposite. It's laying down all claim to power in and of yourself, and relying on *God's* power to transform you, your husband, your circumstances, and your marriage. This power is not given to wield like a weapon in order to beat back an unruly beast. It's a gentle tool of restoration appropriated through the prayers of a wife who longs to *do* right more than *be* right, and to *give life* more than *get even.* It's a way to invite God's power into your husband's life for his greatest blessing, which is ultimately yours, too.

When my husband, Michael, and I were first married and differences arose between us, praying was definitely not my first thought. In fact, it was closer to a last resort. I tried other methods first such as arguing, pleading, ignoring, avoiding, confronting, debating, and of course the ever-popular silent treatment, all with far less than satisfying results. It took some time to realize that by praying *first*, these unpleasant methods of operation could be avoided.

By the time you read this book, Michael and I will have been married more than forty years. This is nothing less than miraculous. It's certainly not a testimony to our greatness, but to God's

faithfulness to answer prayer. I confess that even after all these years, I am still learning about this and it doesn't come easy. While I may not have as much practice doing it right as I have had doing it wrong, I can say without reservation that *prayer works.*

Unfortunately, I didn't learn how to *really* pray for my husband until I started praying for my children. As I saw profound answers to prayer for them, I decided to try being just as detailed and fervent in praying for *him.* But I found that praying for children is far easier. From the first moment we lay eyes on them, we want the best for their lives—unconditionally, wholeheartedly, without question. But with a husband, it's often not that simple—especially for someone who's been married awhile. A husband can hurt your feelings, be inconsiderate, uncaring, abusive, irritating, or negligent. He can say or do things that pierce your heart like a sliver. And every time you start to pray for him, you find the sliver festering. It's obvious you can't give yourself to praying the way God wants you to until you are rid of it.

Praying for your husband is not the same as praying for a child (even though it may seem similar), because you are not your husband's mother. We have authority over our children that is given to us by the Lord. We *don't* have authority over our husbands. However, we have been given authority "over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19) and can do great damage to the enemy's plans when we pray. Many difficult things that happen in a marriage relationship are actually part of the enemy's plan set up for its demise. But we can say, "I will not allow anything to destroy my marriage."

"I will not stand by and watch my husband be wearied, beaten down, or destroyed."

"I will not sit idle while an invisible wall goes up between us."

"I will not allow confusion, miscommunication, wrong attitudes, and bad choices to erode what we are trying to build together."

"I will not tolerate hurt and unforgiveness leading us to divorce."

We can take a stand against any negative influences in our

marriage relationship and know that God has given us authority in His name to back it up.

You have the means to establish a hedge of protection around your marriage because Jesus said, "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18). You have authority in the name of Jesus to *stop evil* and *permit good*. You can submit to God in prayer whatever controls your husband—alcoholism, workaholism, laziness, depression, infirmity, abusiveness, anxiety, fear, or failure—and pray for him to be released from it.

Wait! Before You Write Off the Marriage…

I confess right now that there was a time when I considered separation or divorce. This is an embarrassing disclosure because I don't believe either of those options is the best answer to a troubled marriage. I believe in God's position on divorce. He says it's not right and it grieves Him. The last thing I want to do is grieve God. But I know what it's like to feel the kind of despair that paralyzes good decision making. I've experienced the degree of hopelessness that causes a person to give up on trying to do what's right. I understand the torture of loneliness that leaves you longing for anyone who will look into your soul and see *you.* I've felt pain so bad that the fear of dying from it propelled me to seek out the only immediately foreseeable means of survival: escape from the source of agony. I know what it's like to contemplate acts of desperation because you see no future. I've experienced such a buildup of negative emotions day after day that separation and divorce seemed like nothing more than the promise of pleasant relief.

The biggest problem I faced in our marriage was my husband's temper. The only ones who were ever the object of his anger were me and the children. He used words like weapons that left me crippled or paralyzed. I'm not saying that I was without fault—quite the

contrary. I was sure I was as much to blame as he, but I didn't know what to do about it. I pleaded with God on a regular basis to make my husband more sensitive, less angry, more pleasant, less irritable. But I saw few changes. Was God not listening? Or did He favor the husband over the wife, as I suspected?

After a number of years, with little change, I cried out to the Lord one day in despair, saying, "God, I can't live this way anymore. I know what You've said about divorce, but I can't live in the same house with him. Help me, Lord." I sat on the bed holding my Bible for hours as I struggled with the strongest desire to take the children and leave. I believe that because I came to God in total honesty about what I felt, He allowed me to thoroughly and clearly envision what life would be like if I left: Where I would live, how I would support myself and care for the children, who would still be my friends, and worst of all, how a heritage of divorce would affect my son and daughter. It was the most horrible and unspeakably sad picture. If I left I would find some relief, but at the price of everything dear to me. I knew it wasn't God's plan for us.

As I sat there, God also impressed upon my heart that if I would deliberately lay down my life before His throne, die to the desire to leave, and give my needs to Him, He would teach me how to lay down my life in prayer for Michael. He would show me how to really intercede for him as a son of God, and in the process He would revive my marriage and pour His blessings out on both of us. We would be better together, if we could get past this, than we could ever be separated and alone. He showed me that Michael was caught in a web from his past that rendered him incapable of being different from what he was at that moment, but God would use me as an instrument of His deliverance if I would consent to it. It hurt to say yes to this and I cried a lot. But when I did, I felt hopeful for the first time in years.

I began to pray every day for Michael, like I had never prayed

before. Each time, though, I had to confess my own hardness of heart. I saw how deeply hurt and unforgiving of him I was. *I don't want to pray for him. I don't want to ask God to bless him. I only want God to strike his heart with lightning and convict him of how cruel he has been,* I thought. I had to say over and over, "God, I confess my unforgiveness toward my husband. Deliver me from all of it."

Little by little, I began to see changes occur in both of us. When Michael became angry, instead of reacting negatively, I prayed for him. I asked God to give me insight into what was causing his rage. He did. I asked Him what I could do to make things better. He showed me. My husband's anger became less frequent and more quickly soothed. Every day, prayer built something positive. We're still not perfected, but we've come a long way. It hasn't been easy, yet I'm convinced that God's way is worth the effort it takes to walk in it. It's the only way to save a marriage.

A wife's prayers for her husband have a far greater effect on him than anyone else's, even his mother's. (Sorry, Mom.) A mother's prayers for her child are certainly fervent. But when a man marries, he leaves his father and mother and becomes one with his wife (Matthew 19:5). They are a team, one unit, unified in spirit. The strength of a man and wife joined together in God's sight is *far* greater than the sum of the strengths of each of the two individuals. That's because the Holy Spirit unites them and gives added power to their prayers.

That's also why there is so much at stake if we *don't* pray. Can you imagine praying for the right side of your body and not the left? If the right side is not sustained and protected and it falls, it's going to bring down the left side with it. The same is true of you and your husband. If you pray for yourself and not him, you will never find the blessings and fulfillment you want. What happens to him happens to you and you can't get around it.

This oneness gives us a power that the enemy doesn't like. That's why he devises ways to weaken it. He gives us whatever we will fall

for, whether it be low self-esteem, pride, the need to be right, miscommunication, or the bowing to our own selfish desires. He will tell you lies like, "Nothing will ever change." "Your failures are irreparable." "There's no hope for reconciliation." "You'd be happier with someone else." He'll tell you whatever you will believe, because he knows if he can get you to believe it, there is no future for your marriage. If you believe enough lies, your heart will eventually be hardened against God's truth.

In every broken marriage, there is at least one person whose heart is hard against God. When a heart becomes hard, there is no vision from God's perspective. When we're miserable in a marriage, we feel that anything will be an improvement over what we're experiencing. But we don't see the whole picture. We only see the way it is, not the way God wants it to become. When we pray, however, our hearts become *soft* toward God and we get a vision. We see there is hope. We have faith that He will restore all that has been devoured, destroyed, and eaten away from the marriage. "I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten" (Joel 2:25). We can trust Him to take away the pain, hopelessness, hardness, and unforgiveness. We are able to envision His ability to resurrect love and life from the deadest of places.

Imagine Mary Magdalene's joy when she went to Jesus' tomb the third day after He had been crucified and found that He was not dead after all, but had been raised up by the power of God. The joy of seeing something hopelessly dead brought to life is the greatest joy we can know. The power that resurrected Jesus is the very same power that will resurrect the dead places of your marriage and put life back into it. "God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power" (1 Corinthians 6:14). It's the only power that can. But it doesn't happen without a heart for God that is willing to gut it out in prayer, grow through tough times, and wait for love to be resurrected. We have to go through the pain to get to the joy.

You have to decide if you want your marriage to work, and if you want it badly enough to do whatever is necessary, within healthy parameters, to see it happen. *You* have to believe the part of your relationship that has been eaten away by pain, indifference, and selfishness can be restored. *You* have to trust that what has swarmed over you, such as abuse, death of a child, infidelity, poverty, loss, catastrophic illness, or accident, can be relieved of its death grip. *You* have to determine that everything consuming you and your husband, such as workaholism, alcoholism, drug abuse, or depression, can be destroyed. *You* have to know that whatever has crept into your relationship so silently and stealthily as to not even be perceived as a threat until it is clearly present—such as making idols of your career, your dreams, your kids, or your selfish desires—can be removed. *You* have to trust that God is big enough to accomplish all this and more.

If you wake up one morning with a stranger in your bed and it's your husband, if you experience a silent withdrawal from one another's lives that severs all emotional connection, if you sense a relentless draining away of love and hope, if your relationship is in so bottomless a pit of hurt and anger that every day sends you deeper into despair, if every word spoken drives a wedge further between you until it becomes an impenetrable barrier keeping you miles apart, be assured that none of the above is God's will for your marriage. God's will is to break down all these barriers and lift you out of that pit. He can heal the wounds and put love back in your heart. Nothing and no one else can.

But you have to rise up and say, "Lord, I pray for an end to this conflict and a breaking of the hold strife has on us. Take away the hurt and the armor we've put up to protect ourselves. Lift us out of the pit of unforgiveness. Speak through us so that our words reflect Your love, peace, and reconciliation. Tear down this wall between us

and teach us how to walk through it. Enable us to rise up from this paralysis and move into the healing and wholeness You have for us."

Don't write off the marriage. Ask God to give you a new husband. He is able to take the one you have and make him a new creation in Christ. Husbands and wives are not destined to fight, emotionally disconnect, live in marital deadness, be miserable, or divorce. We have God's power on our side. We don't have to leave our marriages to chance. We can fight for them in prayer and not give up, because as long as we are praying, there is hope. With God, nothing is ever as dead as it seems. Not even your own feelings.

What About Me? I Need Prayer, Too.

It's natural to enter into this prayer venture wondering if your husband will ever be praying for you in the same way you're praying for him. While that would certainly be great, don't count on it. Praying for your husband will be an act of unselfish, unconditional love and sacrifice on your part. You must be willing to make this commitment knowing it is quite possible—even highly probable—that he will never pray for you in the same way. In some cases, he may not pray for you at all. You can ask him to, and you can pray for him to pray for you, but you can't demand it of him. Regardless, whether he does or doesn't is not your concern, it's God's. So release him from that obligation. If he doesn't pray for you, it's *his* loss more than yours anyway. Your happiness and fulfillment will not ride on whether he prays, it will depend on your own relationship with the Lord. Yes, wives need prayer, too. But I'm convinced we should not depend on our husbands to be the sole providers of it. In fact, looking to your husband to be your dedicated prayer partner could be a setup for failure and disappointment for both of you.

I learned that the best thing for our marriage was for me to have women prayer partners with whom I prayed every week. I now believe this is vital for any marriage. If you can find two or more

strong, faith-filled women whom you thoroughly trust, and with whom you can share the longings of your heart, set up a weekly prayer time. It will change your life. This doesn't mean you have to tell your prayer partners everything about your husband or expose the private details of his life. The purpose is to ask God to make *your* heart right, show *you* how to be a good wife, share the burdens of *your* soul, and seek God's blessing on your husband.

Of course, if there is an issue with serious consequences, and you can trust your prayer partners with the confidential nature of your request, by all means share it. I've seen many marriages end in separation or divorce because people were too prideful or afraid to share their problems with someone who could pray for them. They go along putting up a good front and suddenly one day the marriage is over. Be sure to stress the confidential nature of what you're sharing with your prayer partners, but don't throw away the marriage because you're hesitant to pray about it with others. If you have a prayer partner who can't keep a confidence, find someone else with more wisdom, sensitivity, and spiritual maturity.

Even without prayer partners or a praying husband, when you pray fervently you'll see things happen. *Before* your prayers are answered there will be blessings from God that will come to you simply because you are praying. That's because you will have spent time in the presence of God, where all lasting transformation begins.

One Prayer at a Time

Don't be overwhelmed by the many ways there are to pray for your husband. It's not necessary to do it all in one day, one week, or even a month. Let the suggestions in this book be a guide and then pray as the Holy Spirit leads you. Where there are tough issues and you need a dynamic breakthrough, fasting will make your prayers more effective. Also, praying Scripture over your husband is powerful. That's what I have done in the prayers at the end of each chapter, wherever you see a Scripture reference.

Above all, don't give place to impatience. Seeing answers to your prayers can take time, especially if your marriage is deeply wounded or strained. Be patient to persevere and wait for God to heal. Keep in mind that you are both imperfect people. Only the Lord is perfect. Look to God as the source of all you want to see happen in your marriage, and don't worry about *how* it will happen. It's your responsibility to pray. It's God's decision to answer according to His will. Leave it in *His* hands.