

Face To Face Rather Than Side By Side

Craig Hill • Balancing Family & Work

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We talk in the beginning of *Two Fleas & No Dog* about four different stages of marriage: two drowning people, two fleas, two independent swimmers and finally two people in a canoe headed for a destination. It is not possible to move to the fourth stage of marriage, paddling the canoe together, without having significant intimacy with each other. Most people stop in the development of their marriage at the independent swimmer stage. This stage is best pictured by two people going through life side by side, but never face to face. Face to face interaction requires trust and intimacy. Many times when I have asked a married couple to face each other and look into each other's eyes, they cannot sustain direct eye contact for more than a few seconds. Often they begin to laugh, or look down or turn away. Intimacy is potentially intimidating if a couple is not used to the regular experience.

I would like to give you two exercises that will help you build intimate conversation as a couple. One is a prayer exercise, while the other is a conversation exercise. You may have heard the statistic that about one in every two couples in North America divorce. You may not have heard, however, the following information. About one in every two couples who go to church divorce. About one in every two couples who regularly read the Bible divorce. But only one in over 1,100 couples who have a regular habit of praying together daily divorce. So apparently praying together is a key divorce prevention mechanism.

We have learned from our friends Bob and Audrey Meisner a particular way of praying face to face, rather than side to side that helps to build intimacy in the marriage. Bob and Audrey have taught thousands of couples around the world how to practice this habit daily.

Here's how it works. As a couple you sit directly facing each other. Look directly into each other's eyes. (The eyes are the windows of the soul.) You will then pray to God while looking into your spouse's eyes. (Yes, God can hear you even if you have your eyes open.) The prayer will include three components: 1) Repentance; 2) Thanksgiving; 3) Blessing. I believe that it is appropriate for the husband to begin first to pray through these three areas. When he has finished, then the wife will pray the same for the husband. Let me outline how to pray each area. A. Repentance: You will first ask God to remind you of any unconfessed areas in which you have been unloving or disrespectful toward your spouse since the last time you prayed. You simply want to ask the Lord to reveal any instances in which you have sinned against or wounded your spouse with which you have not yet dealt. If or when something comes to your mind, you will then, still looking into your wife's/husband's eyes, confess to him what has come to your mind and ask him to forgive you. Example:

"Sue please forgive me for not considering your feelings and not calling you in advance about going with the kids to the state fair this afternoon."B. Thanksgiving: While still looking into your wife's/husband's eyes, you will speak several sentences to God, thanking Him for those qualities in your spouse. Example: "Father, thank you so much for Jan. I thank you that she is so beautiful to look at this morning. Thank you that she loves You with all her heart and that she is a diligent seeker of You, whom you strongly reward. Thank you that she is a wonderful mother and makes our home a refuge and a place of peace."C. Blessing: While still looking into your wife's/husband's eyes, you will speak several sentences of blessing over your spouse. Example: "Father, I want to pray your blessing over Tom today. I bless Tom with the mind of Christ and your wisdom in all the business decisions he has to make today. Father, I declare Your divine favour over Tom with all of his creditors, vendors and employees this week. I bless him with physical health, inner peace, and may Your word dwell richly in Tom all day today, in the name of Jesus, the Messiah. Amen."

I encourage you to find a regular time every day when you can pray with and for each other in this way. As you can see, this prayer model can be accomplished in just a few minutes. You don't need to find an hour to do this, but only five minutes. If you establish this as a habit, I believe that you will make it very hard for the devil to work very many schemes against you, and you will make it very hard for his schemes to prosper for long in your marriage. In addition, you will significantly increase the intimacy between you.

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(This article is copied from Chapter 7 of Craig Hill's book *Two Fleas & No Dog: Transform Your Marriage From Fleadom to Freedom*.

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