

Prayer Protects Marriage

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[0:00] Amen. Well, today we're going to see another commitment for our marriages.! And it's easy enough to remember, we will work to protect our marriage.

! We will work to protect our marriage. And you do that on your knees. So how do you protect your marriage? You do it by praying together.

By praying together. It's not the only way, for sure. But it is one of the most important ways. So my goal this morning is very simple.

If you are married, and you are not praying together, I want you to begin. And if you are praying together, I want you to continue.

To commit yourself to that. A commitment is something that's binding. That you find an obligation for that. And so this is one obligation that you should take upon yourself. That we will pray together.

[1:00] As a way to protect our marriage. And I really hope that some of you are already doing that. I really hope that. And I think that's true. If you are, good. Praise God. That is really the work of God.

That is the grace of God at work in your life. And so praise God and keep it up. Don't grow weary. Don't grow tired. Stay committed. Don't let it slip in importance.

If we are going to protect our marriages, we are going to do it on our knees. And so the main idea of today is just this. That prayer together.

So this is what we are talking about. As husband and wife pray together. It protects your marriage. It creates an environment where your marriage can thrive.

Where it is safe. And so it brings God right into the middle of your relationship. And when it's just the three of us. Husband, wife, and God.

[1:58] Then that's a good place. It's a good thing. That's a good environment. Your marriage is strong. A cord of three strands is not easily broken. Especially when one of the strands is the Lord Almighty.

The maker of heaven and earth. And so prayer together protects your marriage. Well, how does that work? How does that work? I want to start today with a general picture.

And we are going to take that picture from the world of medicine. And so we are going to take that picture. And then we are going to see how it works out in prayer.

So who knows who Louis Pasteur is? Anyone? What did he do? Jim? No. You are really close though.

It starts with a P. Pasteurization. It's another long word that starts with a P. He invented pasteurization. What is pasteurization?

[3:00] Purification of milk. Purification of milk. So the idea is that there's germs in milk. You heat it up. You kill those germs. You make the milk safe. So, well, why did he do that?

Because he had discovered what we call germs. He was a bit of a scientist. And he liked to use his microscope. And so one day he's looking at his microscope. And he discovered these little creatures swimming around in different things.

And that is what led to the germ theory. And it's basically what modern medicine is based on. That there are germs. And it's the germs. We get sick because germs from the outside get into our bodies and make us sick.

And, you know, that's the basic idea of Western medicine today. You find the culprit. And you find some way of killing it. You take action to kill it.

So if you have the flu or something, I'm not sure here, you're going to take penicillin to go in there and kill that germ. Well, prayer can be like that. It can be like that.

[4:05] But that's not the picture that we're going to use today. So prayer isn't for, prayer can be for seeking out a problem and destroying it. But the picture that we're going to use today is different.

At the same time that Louis Pasteur was coming up with the germ theory, another Frenchman named Antoine Beauchamp, which I don't expect you to remember that. I can hardly remember it. He said, no, no, no. That's actually to think about it backwards. We get sick. This is what he said. Because our bodies are unhealthy in some way. We're thinking about it backwards.

Yes, there's germs, but germs only thrive in an unhealthy environment. And so it's because our bodies themselves are sick that we become sick.

They're not properly functioning, and that allows germs to grow. So vultures appear where there's dead bodies, and germs thrive in an unhealthy environment. He called it a terrain.

[5:05] And so he came up with the terrain theory of medicine, which is not very accepted today, but that's not the point. And so he emphasized things like exercise and pH balance and fresh air and eating healthy food.

He said you want to create an environment in your body where germs don't thrive, where they don't have a very good chance because the body is so healthy. And that's the picture that I want to use, whether it's right or wrong in medicine, that's beside the point.

This is the picture that I want to use for prayer. Because prayer creates an environment in your marriage where the germs of selfishness and pride and fear and shame and discontentment, all the seeds of sin, they don't thrive very well when you're praying.

So prayer creates a healthy environment. So prayer together, it fills your marriage with humility, with faith, with resting, and that I am justified by faith alone, with thankfulness, with hope.

It creates an environment that protects your marriage. And so today, I have eight ways that prayer does that. And five are from the book, and at the very end, if we have time, we're going to talk about three more, that just sort of from my experience of praying with my wife, that I found that this creates a good environment for your marriage.

[6:34] So here's number one. Prayer reminds you that in your marriage, you are never left alone to the resources of your own strength and wisdom.

So prayer reminds you that you're never left alone to your own resources, to your own strength, your own wisdom. So how does the Lord's Prayer begin?

What's the first phrase? Our Father in heaven. Our Father in heaven. So let me ask you, what does that say about you?

You're a child. You're God's child. Now what does it mean to be God's child? Anyone?

Sorry, dependent. You're dependent on Him. What else does it mean to be God's child? You do what you're told. Very good. You're under authority.

[7:41] What else does it mean to be God's child? Mark? I'm loved and accepted. What else does it mean? Blessed.

You're blessed. Protected. You have a Father that protects you. You're an adopted child. God.

So God has gone through certain legal actions to make you His. What else? What's that?

Eternal life. Eternal life. The Father's not going to lose any of His children. So, my next question is, what is that introduction?

Our Father in heaven. What does that say about God? God. Not necessarily anything new here, but what does it say about God?

[8:41] He's our... He's a loving God. He's called you as... I'm your Father. What else? He's called when His plan can't be afforded.

Okay. What else? What else does it say about God? He's the protector.

Sort of the inverse of what we've already seen. What else? He's in heaven. He's our Father in heaven. He rules over all things.

That's a good place to be if you're a child of God, isn't it? To have your Father ruling all things. So, prayer reminds us that we are God's children.

That He's our Father. And He's going to take care of us. He's going to protect us. He's going to love us. He's committed to us. He's ready. And He's able to help us and love us.

[9:37] And so, let me ask you, as a couple, when that is an active part of your life, when that is an active part of your marriage, when by prayer you're bringing that in, what does that do to your relationship?

What does that do for your relationship? When you're living in light of everything that we just said. Okay. Very good. You're common.

You're a brother and sister. It's the same family. Yes, dear. What's that? How so? Very good. We're going to talk about that more. So, what else does it do, Dale? Okay. Okay. So, you're becoming one. What else does it, what else is your marriage going to be marked by when you're realizing that God is your Father, that He's your protector, He's committed to you and loving and caring for you?

What does that mean for you in everyday life? Peace. Why does it mean peace? Peace. I'm not sure who said that. Okay.

[10:48] Yeah. No matter what's going on in the marriage, whatever your marriage is facing, He's in control. Yes, Lou? Yeah. I mean, that promise becomes real for us, and we start living on it.

Basically, we're not desperate anymore as couples. We're not desperate anymore. I mean, whatever you face, disobedient children, sudden disaster, lost job, reoccurring sin, you don't do it alone.

You do it with Him. And so, when we don't pray, we act like orphans. We act like we don't have anyone to take care of us. And what ends up happening is that we start carrying the weight of everything on our shoulders.

And it's not a weight that we can bear without sinning. And without sinning against each other. I had a boss who always used to say, desperate people do desperate things.

So, people who have nothing to lose, or should I say, maybe they have everything to lose, they're going to do desperate things. And it's really true. So, think about David and Bathsheba.

[11:58] You know, they come together, and almost immediately, things go wrong. So, Bathsheba's pregnant, Uriah's away, and David forgets. It's like he totally forgets everything that God has ever done or said about himself.

And David gets desperate. And he starts doing more and more desperate things. And he's dangerous. You know the rest of the story. And so, when we're living like that, when we, as a couple, live a prayerlessness life, we're going to be going from desperate situation to desperate situation.

We're going to be going from one situation that I can't handle to another situation that I can't handle. We're never going to feel comfortable. We're never going to be able to smile at our problems because we know that the Lord works all things together for good.

We're going to be always unsure. But when we pray together, grace enters the relationship. Grace enters into the situation. And we realize more and more that we're not alone.

And so, prayer produces that. It produces a security. It produces a healthy environment where fear and self-righteousness and shame and all those sorts of things, they don't grow well because we're secure in our Father's love.

[13:21] And we experience that as we pray together. Now, secondly, prayer reminds you that God's purposes are bigger than your little life. Prayer reminds you that God's purposes are bigger than your little life.

It puts you, prayer puts you smack dab in the middle of God's kingdom, of his big kingdom. And so, how does the Lord's Prayer go on? It says, Our Father in heaven, what's next?

Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Prayer reminds us that our marriage is not ultimate, that God's kingdom is ultimate.

And prayer reminds us that our little kingdoms, the things and the agendas that we have, they're not ultimate either. God's kingdom is. And so, when we pray together, it brings our marriage, it's like a magnet.

It brings our marriage back to true north, to God's kingdom, that God is holy and that our lives are meant to be lived for his glory.

[14:30] Our marriage is for him. Now, when you don't pray together, when you don't have the shared life where you're not coming together around God's kingdom and around doing his will and around saying, your kingdom come, what happens is your little kingdoms start pulling you away.

Your own separate agendas start pulling you away from each other. So, I'll work on my kingdom and my wife will work on her kingdom and then our kingdoms will start to clash and start to fight. And so, in the middle of our marriage, death and rebellion will enter. And so, at the very middle of our marriage, there's going to be this revolution against God's authority.

And our marriage is not going to be able to thrive. But prayer does the exact opposite. And this is what Dara was talking about. Listen to what Paul Tripp says.

Real unity begins when a husband and a wife quit trying to be sovereign over their lives. Real unity begins when a husband and a wife quit trying to set the agenda for their marriage and begin in practical everyday ways to pursue God's agenda together.

[15:47] Real marital unity begins when a husband and a wife quit being kings and begin to willingly and joyfully submit to the plans and purposes and call of the same king.

so that you have unity because you're serving one king together. And so, prayer reminds us of that. Prayer reminds us that God doesn't give us grace so that our little kingdoms would work better. So, he doesn't give us grace so that we can build a great business or be promoted at work or anything like that so we can have a perfect family of clean, smiling children in a pottery barn house. He gives us grace so that we can live for his kingdom. So that it can turn us outside of ourselves, outside of our claustrophobic little kingdoms and start living for his big sky kingdom, his glorious kingdom.

And that is a healthy environment. When the fresh breezes of God's grace and God's authority and God's glory and his holiness, when those things are blowing through your marriage, it's a healthy environment.

[17:02] And so, sin and selfishness, the things that ruin a marriage, they don't thrive very well when those fresh winds of God's kingdom are blowing through your marriage.

Third, prayer reminds you that of your need and God's provision. Your need and God's provision. So what comes next in the Lord's prayer?

Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give. Give us this day our daily bread. So what does that request say about us?

We're needy people. What does it say about God? He graciously gives, he's the provider, prayer. So prayer, it reminds us of those two things.

That I don't have what it takes. I can't control the things that need to happen. I can't control any of those events to even bring my daily food to my table.

[18:09] And it reminds us that we just don't have physical needs. We have deep spiritual needs, and only God can provide for them.

prayer reminds us that he's willing to provide for them. And so as you pray together, something really marvelous starts to happen.

you start to see God's goodness and provision everywhere. When you don't pray, when you're not looking, when you're just thinking it just naturally comes, then you don't, you're not a very thankful person.

Because you're just, you're blind to the whole situation. But prayer brings us into a world of thanksgiving, where you're truly grateful for all these good gifts that he's given you.

And so remember what James said, that God is the father of the heavenly lights. He says, well, every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the father of heavenly lights.

[19:18] And so when you begin coming as a needy husband and a needy wife before the Lord who provides every good gift, for his, when you start praying together and asking for grace for this situation or that situation, when you start thanking God for your children, thanking God for what he's doing in this life and that life, for all the things that he's providing you with, your eyes open more and more and you start to see that your whole life is littered, is filled with God's good gifts.

And you start seeing them everywhere and that's a healthy place to be when you're living in sort of the cornucopia of God's blessing, when it's just overwhelming you.

And so what it does, it starts encouraging you to ask more, to thank him more, to praise him more, and it gives you more joy when you start seeing, when we see our need together, we see God's provision, God's generosity, it fosters faith.

It says, I'm going to believe God, I'm going to still keep calling on him, and it fosters love for him, because he's so generous to us. And all those things protect your marriage. When you're discontented, when you're anxious, when you don't know, when you're not thankful, it produces all sorts of sins in us that can tear our marriage apart.

So we start overworking, because we can't, we don't have enough. That's just one example. people, but prayer produces thankfulness, produces dependence, and those things protect your marriage.

[21:03] Here's number four. Prayer puts the gospel in the middle of your marriage. Prayer puts the gospel in the middle of your marriage.

How does the Lord's Prayer go on? give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us of our debts as we forgive our debtors, forgive us of our sins.

Yes, exactly. It puts, it puts us in the middle of the realization, it makes us realize that we need grace.

We need mercy. Prayer makes no sense if it's not rooted in grace. Prayer makes no sense if it doesn't recognize that God has loved you and you couldn't have earned it.

There's no way you could have achieved it. You couldn't have deserved it. You received it. He generously gave it to you. And by prayer we realize that we couldn't have earned this thing.

[22:15] we couldn't have earned this marriage. We couldn't have earned this blessing of a spouse. We couldn't have earned these children. We couldn't have earned this family. We couldn't have earned all the things that we can thank him for.

We can't earn his help. We can't earn his strength for tomorrow. We can't earn any of those things because we're debtors. and we've been forgiven a great debt.

I'm a sinner. We are sinners. And so why would God ever hear me except for his grace? Why would God ever answer me except for his grace?

And so prayer humbles us. You can't be strong. You can't be the provider. You can't be powerful when you're begging.

And prayer humbles us. And it reminds us that for Jesus Christ's sake, God hears us. And that our sins are forgiven. And so it doesn't only remind us of our sin, it just reminds us of the grace that we have.

[23:22] That we have been forgiven. And so prayer brings that gospel right into the middle of our marriage. When we realize that we both need the gospel, that I am deeply sinful and yet deeply and greatly loved, that opens the channels of our hearts so that we can come to each other, so that we can have unity within our marriage and it brings us closer.

So what does the gospel do when you're both believing it, when you're both holding on to it, when it's both precious to you? What does that do in your marriage? What does it protect you from? love that only comes to God and have knowledge about what we've done? Right. When God is overflowing your life with love, there's extra to give, isn't there?

There's extra. There's sort of like emotional resources because he's filling you up. What else does it do? Yeah.

You can't hold a grudge and hold on to the gospel. I can't hold on a grudge because God hasn't held a grudge against me. He's forgiven.

[24:53] And I can't withhold forgiveness because God has forgiven me, and I can't give my wife the silent treatment because God has graciously spoken to me.

He said, you're forgiven, you're righteous, I love you. When all those things, when you're hearing those things and believing those things, you have to act in line with it.

What else does it do? Can you think of anything else? Well, let's I mean, I can't be selfish anymore. I can't be selfish with my time, my energy. I can't be selfish with my efforts. I can't be selfish because the Lord was not selfish with his things, with his time, with his resources.

And so when we come together and pray as a couple, we both come under and recognize that mercy, that I am a sinner and I have been forgiven.

[25:58] God has been very gracious to me. And that roots out pride. And it roots out self-righteousness. So we can't say about our spouse, well, I'm, or we can't even think about our spouse.

You know what? They do this and I don't do that and so I'm better than they are. Or however that works. I'm a sinner and I need grace.

And the only way that I'm going to make it is by grace. And so there's grace to give. There's no self-righteousness here because it's all of Jesus' righteousness.

And so prayer puts the gospel in the front and center of our marriage and it protects it. It creates a place where there's mercy. There's not judgment. There's grace and there's not condemnation.

There's patience. There's not these exacting expectations of the other person because I have been shown great patience. So it creates this environment where your marriage can thrive, where the husband and wife can thrive individually and you can thrive together.

[27:05] Now fifth, prayer fosters humility and faith. The last phrase of the Lord's Prayer is lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.

When we pray, we acknowledge that the biggest problem that I have in my marriage is me. It's inside of me. I am weak.

I am given to sin. The world is too much. The temptations are too much. Satan is too much. If the Lord doesn't help, I'm going to fall.

And so I need grace and I need Jesus to deliver me. And so when I see my weakness and I see Jesus' strength, it humbles me. And I walk humbly with my spouse because there's no hope for my marriage apart from a strong deliverer.

There's no hope for me without a strong deliverer. And Jesus has come to destroy the works of the devil. And so we put our faith in him and that humbles us and it gives us such confidence as we go out.

[28:11] So when all those things are flowing, when faith is there, when humility is there, when love is there, it protects your marriage.

It creates this environment, again, where God's power is flowing, where his grace is flowing. And that creates, it puts a wall around it.

It makes it such a healthy environment that those seeds of sin, they don't thrive. And so they become easier and easier to pluck out.

We're not saying that you're going to be perfect, but it goes a long way to making sure that the weeds stay pullable, stay manageable in some way.

Now, that's what the book has to say. Now, I want to end with three quick reasons that I've discovered.

[29:09] And he didn't include it, but I wanted to say something about it. And I hope these things are encouraging to you. And the first of the three is this, that prayer breaks down distance in your marriage. Dare talked about this.

When we pray together, in some ways, it brings us back to the garden. And I don't mean completely, but I mean it brings us back to Eden again.

Remember, Adam and Eve were naked originally and unashamed. And when you come into the presence of God, you're coming into the presence of the one who nothing is hidden from.

You can't hide. You can't hide behind the fig leaves of anything when you're really praying. And when you're doing that hand in hand with your sweetie, with your honey, with your husband or wife, that can be a wildly freeing thing.

And so we're not pretending to be strong anymore. We're not pretending that we have it all together. Here I am. Warts and all. And when you're both doing that, it brings you together.

[30:21] It breaks down those distances. And as we pray together, and as we learn to trust in Jesus more and more, that His righteousness is enough, that His love and grace are enough, then we learn to stop, we learn to take off the fig leaves.

We put away the distance, and you learn to trust each other as you pray together. together.

Because you're learning to trust God together. Second, prayer fosters communication.

Probably one of the biggest complaints in marriage is the lack of communication. And when you pray together, it just naturally leads you to talking and communicating more. prayer. When you learn to speak to God together, you learn how to speak to each other in constructive and more caring ways.

Because you're breaking down those barriers, you're learning to express your needs, your thanksgiving, your wants, all those things. You just learn how to speak to one another more. prayer. And then third, praying together helps you love each other.

So do you want to know what it feels like to be loved? Sit and listen while your spouse pours out the burdens of your heart.

[31:41] prayer. When she takes those things upon her and prays them to the Lord. And I know my wife loves me because she prays for me. And I know that she prays for me because I'm with her when we pray together.

And so in prayer, we carry each other's burdens. And as you do this, you're going to find out, men and women, that there are days that you don't feel like praying. Where you're so burdened, you're so struggling, and you're so disappointed, you're so heartbroken.

There's sin or whatever. And you just feel like you can't do it. And to have your husband or your wife to take those things up in even a small way and pray, it draws you closer to each other. It fosters love. And so prayer helps us love each other. And it makes you want to share your life more with each other.

As they become, as you learn to trust each other, as you learn that, you know what, she or he really does care about me, it draws you closer together.

[32 : 49] And it protects your marriage because it becomes too precious of a thing to lose. So, application.

Will you commit to pray together? Will you commit to pray together? Will you commit to start tomorrow, if not today? And don't wait. Don't wait.

Work on a routine. And, you know, I can't give you any suggestions. All your lives are different. And it's going to take a little effort to get into a routine.

But get to the point where you're just doing it. It's just a natural part of your life where you don't have to ask, you don't have to say anything, you don't have to think about it. You're there. You're praying together.

And don't get discouraged. And don't get discouraged if all the things that we've talked about, they don't start to happen right away. You know, it's not, we're still sinners. This isn't like the magic bullet.

[33 : 52] If you don't see great results right away, don't get discouraged. It's a process. We are a microwave generation, aren't we? I mean, we look at the Hot Pockets direction and they're like, two minutes, oh, I'm hungry right now.

This is a crockpot. It's a crockpot. It gets better. It gets sweeter. It gets tastier with time. So learn to do it.

Pray together and pray together and pray together. Commit to the long run and you will see a lot of the things. You'll start to see more and more of the things that we've talked about. More love for each other, more unity, better communication, more faith, more hope, more thanksgiving.

And that's going to create an environment that protects your marriage. Germs aren't going to want to come in. They can't thrive there. Well, they're going to want to come in, but they're not going to be able to thrive there.

just do it. Just do it. Ask the Lord for help. I just think of one more thing.

[34 : 58] Don't be afraid to start. It's going to be a bit awkward. If you've been married for any length of time and you haven't been doing it, it's not a part of your life, I think it's going to be a bit awkward at first.

It's going to be awkward to bring it up. Because, I don't know, it's sort of like taking off the fig leaves a little bit. And that's hard at first.

But it's only really hard the first time. And this is a perfect opportunity to say, you know what, honey, we need to be doing this. We've talked about this.

Let's do it. And after the first time, maybe after the second time, it gets to be easier and it gets to be less awkward like that.

The duties are. So let's get about it. We are dismissed.