

Does Verbally Praying With Your Wife Make You Uncomfortable?

I came from a religious background that taught and modeled for me that prayers consisted of reciting to God memorized words that have been passed down through the centuries. I vividly recall mindlessly reciting such prayers on many occasions. That was all I knew to do.

Then I trusted in Jesus Christ as my Savior during my college days and started my journey with the Lord. I remember attending the first Bible study of my life. When it came time to pray, the leader launched into spontaneously talking out loud to God! He seemed to know what to say.

Then a terrifying thing happened. Other people in the group, taking turns one by one, also started to talk out loud to God. They said creative words in prayers right off the top of their heads! I found myself thinking, with my heart pounding, "Oh no, what if they expect me to do this too?" But thankfully that did not happen.

Quickly I recognized that, as a Christian, I needed somehow to learn to do this. I needed to be ready, on the spot, at any time, to launch into a spontaneous and extemporaneous (and eloquent, I might add) prayer to God. I thought I had to impress everyone praying with me, and especially to remember that God is listening!

Perhaps these words and emotions from my past constitute your present situation. Maybe you and/or your wife are hesitant to pray out loud. If so, that is just fine. Honestly, it's all the more reason for suggesting that the Bible is the perfect guide to help you find the words to say in front of the Lord and each other. I promise: This will work for you.

On the other hand, maybe you are completely comfortable voicing extemporaneous prayers. Perhaps you have been doing it for years. Even so, I would suggest that “expository praying”—reading a paragraph of the Bible together and letting the text be the guide for what you pray—will bring a freshness and vitality to prayers with your wife. In fact, they may become more alive than ever.

Vicki and I started into this model of praying through books of the Bible and had a wonderful time together. We began to see some great things happen. We were intentionally connecting together spiritually more regularly than ever before. God was answering some special prayers. We were observing and learning some helpful truths from God’s Word.

Yet after we were praying together for a season, I began to sense a prompting from the Lord. God wanted me to use my personal failure in praying with my wife as a platform to call other Christian men out on this same issue.

So I started to do just that. Gradually, as God seemed to prompt my heart, I would grab lunch with one of my friends and share my story. Then I would ask him the “big question”—the one about how he was doing with his wife in the area of praying together.

I serve full-time in missions with e3 Partners Ministry, a group that mobilizes teams of North Americans in a short-term missions model. Our approach is to preach the gospel to help churches and pastors around the world strengthen and start new churches. Given my calling and career, most of the men in my immediate circle of contact are pastors, elders, missionaries, Christian leaders and businessmen who are strong Christians. Therefore, in most instances, I have been sharing this story and challenge with men who would be recognized as Christian leaders. They are godly men, intending to guide and influence others for Jesus Christ and for the growth of His church and the advancement of His kingdom.

I sit across the table from them and share my story. Then I turn the issue toward them, saying, "I want to ask you a personal question. You are my friend, but you can lie to me or tell me the truth—you can decide [they usually chuckle] But here is the question: Apart from prayers at meals, praying to put children to bed or praying at church or a meeting, how often do you and your wife pray together, just the two of you?"

What I suspected has proven true. Most every Christian man is living with some level of burden that he is not providing adequate spiritual leadership at home with his wife—particularly evident by the lack of prayer they share alone together as husband and wife. When I ask the "big question," I find that, just like me, they are bumping along, connecting spiritually in only a haphazard way. Invariably, they say something like, "Sam, I am exactly like you described it!"

Pay attention—this is important! I am not interested in heaping more guilt on you. If you are reading this, you obviously desire to be a spiritual leader for your wife and family. But the struggle simply boils now to one core issue: We men simply do not know what to do! We are trying to guide our families for Jesus Christ. We are seeking to do the "right things." But we somehow know and feel there is a linchpin missing.

You can step forward confidently and with growing success. I am excited to give you hope! You can enjoy increasing "wins" as a spiritual leader with your wife and family. Just let the Bible be the guide for your prayers.

This is the third and final part of this series of excerpts from Sam Ingrassia's book *Just Say the Word*. For part one, [click here](#). For part two, [click here](#).

This article is adapted from Just Say the Word: A Simple Way

to Increase Your Passion for God and Your Wife by Sam Ingrassia. For more information about creating spiritual intimacy by praying with your wife, please visit .