

How Prayer Can Revitalize Your Emotionally Dead Marriage

John 15:15 says, "I no longer call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master does. But I have called you friends, for everything that I have heard from My Father have I made known to you."

Skills are important in every area of our life—on-the-job training, improving your education, your ministry, yourself or relationships. Acquired skills are usually an important part of growth in our life.

If you have ever been part of a sports team, you know the experience of repeating certain drills over and over again in practice. Sometimes you think the coach is crazy for making you do the same thing over and over again. The purpose of training is so that, when you play the real game, you can do it successfully without much thinking, because you and your body have already gone through the routine many times.

I think the movie *Miracle* best illustrates this point. Here is a group of young men trying out for the Olympic hockey team. They were run almost to their breaking point. Finally, after much blood, sweat and many tears, they became a team and, against all odds, won the gold medal in hockey.

Just like sports, relationships take certain skills. If you practice these skills, you can get so good at them that relationships become very easy. If, however, you are like most people, single or not, you will never have learned many of the basic relationship skills.

I sought these skills. I will never forget the epiphany I had while working on my master's degree in marriage and family

counseling. I realized my professors were not going to teach me how to be an intimate person. This directed me toward seeking the Lord to gain these relational skills so that I could be successful in intimate relationships.

Prayer, of course, is an important part of Christian friendship and romantic relationship. I'm not talking about just your prayer life between you and God. I'm talking about your skill of prayer with others.

To be successful at praying with others, you need to practice. Some of you right now are recoiling. "Oh no, not me." Some of you are hiding behind some lie that it is not your personality to do this. Well, your personality is not the main concern here. It is Christ's life and personality we are trying to duplicate.

Jesus prayed publicly, privately and even with his friends. He even prayed publicly for his crucifiers, while practically naked and beaten in public. That's radical, but that is not what I am asking you to do. I am simply suggesting that, as a Christian, prayer is a skill that you must develop to be relationally successful. You see, we are building spiritual relationships, not just your ordinary, everyday relationship.

Practice praying with others. Start with praying with people of the same gender and get good at it. When it becomes appropriate for you, pray in mixed groups. As Christians, one of the things that will attract you eventually to a spouse is their spiritual skills.

If a man or woman is not comfortable praying with others in their singleness, this could be a lifelong problem. Imagine marrying someone who won't pray with you through the good and bad times of a marriage. Imagine a spouse who won't pray in family times or with your child when putting him or her to bed. This same spouse probably won't pray on birthdays, holidays or anniversaries either. Imagine a grandparent who

won't pray with their grandchildren. It's devastating how much of a drain it can be on a family generation after generation if they don't learn to pray. It feels heavy even writing about being in such a relationship. I can confirm that this happens too. I've seen it happen in front of my eyes in my counseling office.

Remember: Marriage changes nothing about a person. If your date or possible future spouse doesn't have the skill of praying with you, wait to marry them. This skill is critical for a successful Christian friendship, romantic relationship, marriage, parenting and grandparenting.

Now, let's look at the positive side of developing this skill. Suppose you are in a friendship with someone of the opposite sex who is skillful at prayer in a mixed group and can effectively pray for you. You feel the presence of God when they pray for you or others. You begin to date/court and prayer starts and ends your date time. You marry, and now prayer is part of your regular day together. On good days and tough days, they are there for you and are able and willing to pray. You have children together, and they can pray with the children during the day and at night before bed. You can hear your sons and daughters praying with the parent. Holidays, birthdays and anniversaries are framed with prayer. Your grandchildren love to be prayed for by this grandparent. Even your grandchildren's prayers echo through your house at night before bed.

How does this picture feel? It feels great, I know. You can decide in your season of singleness if you are going to develop this relationship skill of prayer or not. Remember that you are laying a foundation for future generations. Is your foundation going to be built on only what you are comfortable with (your personality), or will you build it on a set of skills that can bring you success in your Christian relationships? {eoa}

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