



Blending Two Spiritual Lives

Loving God is a great place to build a foundation for spiritual intimacy within a marriage.

by Susan Mathis

He shook his head dolefully as we talked about our future marriage and my thoughts on spiritual intimacy. "I'm not so sure I'm knowledgeable enough to be the spiritual partner you need me to be," Dale said. "You know the Bible so much better than I do. You've been a Christian decades longer than I have."

Over the course of our conversation, Dale realized that God's plan for spiritual intimacy did not depend on how much time we'd spent in a church — or even the amount of understanding we each had of spiritual things. We both deeply loved God, and that was a great place to start building a spiritual foundation.

Since we'd both been single for many years, we were used to deepening our relationship with Christ on our own. We had to learn how to share our deeply personal spiritual lives and grow together as a couple. As we've worked to deepen our spiritual intimacy, I've learned a few things along the way.

Let Go of Misconceptions

Dale's steps in creating a Christ-focused home were not what I had expected, but our life together has ended up even better than anything I had planned. The tone and attitude he established set a firm foundation for our marriage.

I may have subconsciously expected to marry a pastorlike man. Dale did not live up to my unrealistic expectations, but he did fulfill the role God designed for him in our marriage. Though he didn't sit me down every night for an hour of prayer and Bible study, Dale lived out 1 Corinthians 13. He incorporated the fruits of the Spirit into everyday living, and he directed many of our conversations to what Jesus would say or do.

In such an atmosphere, instead of holding on to my preconceived expectations, I enjoyed the journey of growing together spiritually.

Encourage Each Other

One of the most productive things I found I could do is encourage and empower Dale with genuine love and appreciation. When I see him take a positive spiritual step, simple affirmation gives him the courage to continue building our spiritual intimacy.

I watch for those moments — when he takes the risk to pray in a group or comments during one of our Bible studies. I make sure I let him know how proud I am of him and acknowledge his initiative. As I applaud his efforts to seek God, our spiritual relationship grows stronger day by day.

Accept One Another

Naturally, I sometimes wish my husband would change in certain ways, but I know better than to nag or criticize. One friend of mine thought that if she nagged her husband enough, he'd take his rightful place as a Christian husband. Instead, she built a wall of criticism that kept him from even trying. Now, years later, they are spiritual strangers.

As I take my concerns to God, He teaches me to be patient and entrust my husband to Him. At the same time, I must continue pursuing my own growth without worrying that my husband might fall behind. We're not running a race but traveling together on a lifelong journey; the progress of either one of us benefits both.

Work As a Team

Dale and I keep in mind that we are a team. So we make plans together regarding our spiritual life: church involvement, small-group connections, goals for prayer, Bible study, tithing and other disciplines. We address all these things as a couple, even if both of us don't participate in all of them at the time.

Though each of us may grow in different areas at different times, we will stay connected spiritually as long as we work as a team and pray for each other. Praying daily is especially important to us — whether together or on our own. As we cover each other in prayer, our hearts and minds naturally come to a special place of love and desire to see God work in our spouse.

As we've encouraged and accepted one another, and trusted God in the areas where we fall short, we've found that our spiritual intimacy is one of the most beautiful aspects of our marriage.

Scripture teaches that marriage is ordained by God and part of His original design for us as well as a foreshadowing of our eternal relationship with Him.

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