

FOUNDATION GROUP CURRICULUM

S A M P L E

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Session 3. Spiritual Intimacy: Pursuing the Lord Together

A strong marriage is built upon the foundation of a husband and wife both pursuing the Lord individually and together as a couple. Last time you met as a group you discussed your relationship with Christ as well as your individual health and wellness in five different spheres. In this lesson you'll learn about the importance of an ongoing, dependent relationship with Jesus Christ, both individually and together as a couple.

Let's be honest: most couples don't do this well and have not seen it modeled well by parents or peers. You and your spouse get to change the trajectory of your family's legacy. The habits you establish early on in your marriage can lead to long-lasting fruit, and any married couple will tell you it's much harder to start new habits years into marriage than at the beginning.

Because spiritual intimacy is not automatic or natural for most people, you'll need to intentionally cultivate habits that integrate your spiritual lives as husband and wife. In this lesson you'll assess your spiritual intimacy as a couple, learn about some obstacles you'll need to overcome, and discuss some practices to incorporate into your lives and marriage.

Reflection and Discussion Questions:

1. What did spiritual intimacy with the Lord look like for you before marriage?
2. Have you found it easier or harder to grow spiritually now that you're married? How has it changed after marriage?

How's Your Intimacy with the Lord?

Before you think through and discuss ways to grow as a couple, take some time to assess how you're doing in your own relationship with Jesus. None of us can make our spouse grow or take steps towards Jesus, but we all have everything we need to grow on our own. In 2 Peter 1:3, Peter writes, "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence." God's power gives us all we need to become godlier.

Give yourself an honest assessment on where you are today on the following questions using a 1-5 scale, with 1=never/rarely, 5=very often/consistently

- ____ I spend time in prayer
- ____ I read the Bible and follow a reading plan
- ____ I share with others what God is teaching me
- ____ I attend church
- ____ I encourage others spiritually
- ____ I ask others intentional spiritual questions (e.g., what is God teaching you today?)
- ____ I confess struggles
- ____ I pray for others
- ____ I dream about how God might use my life
- ____ I practice spiritual disciplines such as Sabbath, fasting, and solitude

While you're at it, take some time to assess how you're doing as a couple in spiritual intimacy.

Give yourselves (as a couple) an honest assessment on where you are today on the following questions using a 1-5 scale, with 1=never/rarely, 5=very often/consistently

- ____ We pray together (even briefly)
- ____ We read the Bible together or separately and share about it with each other
- ____ We talk about what God is teaching us
- ____ We attend church together
- ____ We encourage each other spiritually
- ____ We ask each other intentional spiritual questions (e.g., what is God teaching you?)
- ____ We confess struggles
- ____ We pray for each other
- ____ We dream together about how God might use our marriage
- ____ We practice spiritual disciplines such as Sabbath, fasting, and solitude

Reflection and Discussion Questions:

1. What observations do you have about how you're doing individually and as a couple spiritually?
2. What's one way you can encourage your spouse spiritually?
3. What's one small step you could try this week?

Obstacles Couples Face: Why we struggle with spiritual intimacy

If you and your spouse struggle to be spiritually intimate with the Lord and with each other, it's helpful to figure out why. This list is not all-inclusive, but these are some of the most common obstacles to spiritual intimacy:

- 1. Because most (or even all) of our needs are already met.** Many of us live in an affluent, performance-oriented culture. We work hard, achieve, buy stuff, and have pretty much everything we want or need. We wouldn't mind a nicer car or some new clothes, but most of us have food in the pantry, more clothes than we need, and even a "house for our car"! We don't feel a need for God because we've elevated the physical over the spiritual, so we don't pursue him.
- 2. We live in an instant gratification culture.** We're not used to waiting for anything. Our lives are filled with instant messages, Instagram, and fast food. Because God is not a vending machine that immediately gives us what we want, and we're accustomed to immediately getting whatever we want, we don't seek the Lord.
- 3. We don't believe God hears us.** We think he is too busy to hear our petty prayer requests. If God is the Lord of the universe as he claims, then he's currently Lord over 8,000,000,000 people.

Certainly, we think, our requests don't matter in the big picture, especially when so many people seem to have "bigger" needs than we do.

4. We forget to pray. We don't pray because we're so busy. Tyranny of the urgent reigns and we don't often make time for the things that really matter. Life never seems to slow down, and most people are caught up in obligations, commitments, schedule demands, and our own selfish agendas. In his book *Respectable Sins*, Jerry Bridges calls this **the sin of ungodliness**—living as if we don't need God by not prioritizing time with him.

5. We feel alone and hopeless. Sometimes we just don't think there's any point in praying or pursuing the Lord, either individually or as a couple. Maybe you've tried praying with your spouse and they haven't reciprocated. Or maybe you've prayed for years for someone or about a specific issue and God seemingly hasn't answered your prayers. Perhaps you've given up because God feels so distant and uncaring.

6. We are overwhelmed by the pace of life and don't know where or how to start. Sometimes we can look at our lives and the world around us and the mess seems so big that we don't even know where to start. Instead we pretend the mess doesn't exist. Or we think we're too small and inadequate, so we don't know where to start or how to pray and we just give up.

7. We're full of pride. You might think, "I've got this and I can handle it on my own, with my own strength and my own resources." We think we don't need God, so we just proceed in our pride and ignorance.

8. It's just really... awkward. Yes, prayer can be awkward. But so is sharing a bathroom with your spouse or getting naked and having sex together. Marriage naturally brings moments of awkwardness—but those moments can become opportunities for connection.

9. We don't realize we're in a very real battle. Satan doesn't want us to pray. In Ephesians 6:11-12, Paul writes, "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." Every time we pray, we take a step against the enemy. God wants married couples to pray together, and the enemy will do whatever he can to keep us from praying, reading the Bible, and building intimacy with him.

10. We don't know how to pray or pursue Jesus. Maybe you and your spouse both want to pray, read your Bible, fast, and observe a Sabbath day. But you just don't know how—perhaps it's never

been modeled for you. Your group and leaders will help with this! Be patient and come with a posture of humility with a desire to learn and grow.

Reflection and Discussion Questions:

1. Out of all the obstacles listed above, with which do you most identify?
2. Ask your spouse the same question and be prepared to discuss with your group.

Awkward but Worth It

Ben and Kelsey both loved Jesus but had never prayed together. On their wedding night, they decided they should try it, but when Ben opened his mouth, the words stuck in his throat. It felt forced, awkward, even embarrassing. So they stopped.

Months later, after a hard fight, Kelsey suggested, “Let’s just try praying together again.” This time they pushed through the awkwardness. Over time, prayer became the most natural part of their marriage. Now, years later, they laugh about how hard it was at first, but also say it’s the one practice that has held their marriage together.

Practices to Incorporate into Your Lives and Marriage

A central theme in pastor and author A.W. Tozer’s theology was that anything that detracts from a relationship with God and the study of his word is detrimental to the soul, however harmless it may appear to be.”

You were created for relationship with God, not just with your spouse. And while you will spend a lot of time in this group working on your marriage, if you don’t focus on the most important relationship—your relationship with Christ— your marriage will never be what you want it to be or what God intends for it to be.

Spiritual intimacy begins with the belief that God loves you. He loves you not because of anything you’ve done, but because of his own mercy and grace (Ephesians 2:4-5). He showed his love for you most clearly by sending his Son Jesus to die for your sins (Romans 5:8).

In view of God's love for us, we ought to make intentional efforts to get to know him. These are a few ways you and your spouse can do that:

Read, Study, and Apply God's Word

While you don't have to read God's Word together with your spouse, one of the best ways to grow in your relationship with Jesus is by both reading the Word and sharing with each other what God is teaching you. We recommend three simple practices to help make studying God's Word a regular habit: a predetermined time, plan, and place.

- **Time:** Try to schedule and make space for a consistent time every day to get into God's Word. It could be any time of the day, but most people find the morning to be best since there tend to be fewer distractions. Make the effort to read God's Word around the same time every day.
- **Plan:** It helps to have a regular reading plan so you know what you're going to read every day (and so that you're not just stumbling around trying to figure out what to read). Check out a reading plan like *Join the Journey* from Watermark Community Church, *The Bible Reading Plan* from Harris Creek Baptist Church, or *The Bible Recap* by Tara Leigh Cobble. You can also find some great options through the Bible App and countless more online.
- **Place:** It helps to have a consistent spot where you read your Bible every day, perhaps at the dining room table or a favorite chair.

One of the best decisions you'll ever make is to share with your spouse what you're learning from God through his Word. Some days you might study the same books or chapters of the Bible and other times you will read something different. Regardless, make it a regular habit to share what God is teaching you.

There are many great studies and books to help you learn how to better read, study, and apply God's Word. Another option is to read a devotional together. There are some resources listed at the end of this lesson.

Attend and Serve in Church Together

Make it a priority to attend church together every week. Sit with each other and, if you can, the other couples in your group. Shared time together learning and worshipping together will help grow your marriage and your friendships with the other couples. Use the gifts God has entrusted to you to serve together through your church.

Another habit that will pay long-term dividends is regularly discussing what you each learned in church. You can also incorporate this powerful habit with kids when and if you have them.

Pray Together and For Each Other

Multiple studies have shown a drastically lower divorce rate for couples who consistently pray together out loud. And while starting this habit can be challenging for many couples (see the list of obstacles above), it might be the singular habit most important for the health of your marriage.

It doesn't matter how you pray, where you pray, or when you pray. It doesn't have to be in the morning, in bed, or for a predetermined amount of time. Rather, make it a practice to pray with and for each other throughout your day. Sometimes you'll pray together and other times you'll pray for your spouse.

Here are a few practical ways to pray together:

- Share one prayer request and pray aloud for each other.
- Pick a short passage (like a Psalm) to read and reflect on together.
- Read a marriage devotional and then pray together.

Reflection and Discussion Questions

1. Try one practice this week that you've never done (e.g., pray together, read a Psalm aloud, attend church and discuss the message). Be ready to share with the rest of your group what you did, what you learned, and how it helped grow your marriage.

2. How have you seen spiritual intimacy modeled well by other couples?

Spiritual intimacy is not about one person knowing more about the Bible than the other. It's not a competition to see who can pray more and read the Bible more. It's about helping and encouraging each other to become more like Jesus Christ. This requires humility, consistency, patience, and intentionality. Nothing will grow your marriage like helping each other pursue Jesus, *together*.

Spiritual intimacy depends not by perfection but on persistent pursuit—two people walking side by side toward Jesus.

Weekly Challenge:

Here's a fun way to make prayer a daily rhythm. Set an alarm on your phone to go off at the time that matches up with your anniversary. For example, if your anniversary is September 29, set your alarm for 9:29 AM or PM (or both!). When your alarm goes off, stop what you're doing and take a few moments to pray for your spouse and for your marriage. If your spouse is with you, pray with them.

Additional Resources:

Books

- *Spiritual Pathways*, Gary Thomas
- Bible studies from *She Reads Truth* and *He Reads Truth* or *The Daily Grace Co.*
- *The Ready or Knot Prayer Guide*, Scott Kедersha
- *The Praying Life*, by Paul Miller

Leader's Guide – Session 3: Spiritual Intimacy: Pursuing the Lord Together

Session Goal

Help couples see that a strong marriage grows when both spouses pursue Jesus individually and together. This session equips them to identify obstacles, form spiritual rhythms, and begin cultivating prayer, Scripture reading, and worship as a couple.

1. Leader Prep

- Read: Full session, discussion questions, and all “obstacles” before group.
- Pray: Ask God to deepen each couple’s hunger for the Lord and for courage to start spiritual practices together, even when it feels awkward.
- Reminder: Spiritual intimacy isn’t about perfection—it’s about persistent pursuit and shared dependence on Christ.

2. Opening

- Welcome & Review: Briefly recap the last session (“A Healthy and Strong Marriage Starts with Me”). Ask what growth they noticed in personal rhythms since then.
- Transition: “Tonight we’ll talk about what it means to pursue Jesus not only as individuals but also together as a couple. We’ll name the common challenges, then explore some habits that build spiritual connection.”

3. Main Curriculum Discussion

- Personal Assessment
 - Have couples share takeaways from the individual and couple intimacy checklists/assessments
 - Ask:
 - “What surprised you about your scores?”
 - “Where are you strong? Where do you want to grow?”
- Obstacles to Spiritual Intimacy
 - Read Ephesians 6:11–12 together.
 - Ask:
 - “Which obstacle resonated most with you?”
 - “How have busyness, comfort, or pride made prayer or Scripture difficult?”
 - Emphasize: Recognizing the enemy’s schemes and our habits of distraction helps couples fight *together*, not against each other.

- Practices to Build Intimacy - Highlight three rhythms:
 - Read God's Word Together (or share what you're reading).
 - Discuss time, plan, and place ideas.
 - Attend and Serve in Church Together.
 - Ask how they can use their gifts jointly.
 - Pray Together and for Each Other.
 - Encourage short, simple prayers aloud; model if needed.
 - Optional Scriptures: 2 Peter 1:3; Ephesians 2:4–5; Romans 5:8.

4. Application & Weekly Challenge

- Ask: "What's one small step you'll take this week—pray together, share what you read, or discuss Sunday's message?"
- Challenge: Set an alarm for your anniversary time (e.g., 9:29 AM for September 29) and pray for your spouse when it rings.
- Encourage couples to share next time what practice they tried and what they learned.

5. Leader Notes

- Keep tone light and grace-filled; normalize awkwardness in spiritual practices.
- Celebrate small wins—one prayer together is a big step.
- Watch for: spiritual discouragement, shame, or comparison. Redirect to grace and growth, not guilt.
- Close your meeting in prayer—consider pairing couples to pray briefly for each other.

6. Optional Resources to Share

- *The Praying Life* – Paul Miller
- *The Ready or Knot Prayer Guide* – Scott Kedersha
- *Spiritual Pathways* – Gary Thomas
- *Join the Journey* (Bible reading plan – Watermark Community Church)