

faithfulness to answer prayer. I confess that even after all these years, I am still learning about this and it doesn't come easy. While I may not have as much practice doing it right as I have had doing it wrong, I can say without reservation that *prayer works*.

Unfortunately, I didn't learn how to *really* pray for my husband until I started praying for my children. As I saw profound answers to prayer for them, I decided to try being just as detailed and fervent in praying for *him*. But I found that praying for children is far easier. From the first moment we lay eyes on them, we want the best for their lives—unconditionally, wholeheartedly, without question. But with a husband, it's often not that simple—especially for someone who's been married awhile. A husband can hurt your feelings, be inconsiderate, uncaring, abusive, irritating, or negligent. He can say or do things that pierce your heart like a sliver. And every time you start to pray for him, you find the sliver festering. It's obvious you can't give yourself to praying the way God wants you to until you are rid of it.

Praying for your husband is not the same as praying for a child (even though it may seem similar), because you are not your husband's mother. We have authority over our children that is given to us by the Lord. We *don't* have authority over our husbands. However, we have been given authority "over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19) and can do great damage to the enemy's plans when we pray. Many difficult things that happen in a marriage relationship are actually part of the enemy's plan set up for its demise. But we can say, "I will not allow anything to destroy my marriage."

"I will not stand by and watch my husband be wearied, beaten down, or destroyed."


"I will not sit idle while an invisible wall goes up between us."

"I will not allow confusion, miscommunication, wrong attitudes, and bad choices to erode what we are trying to build together."

"I will not tolerate hurt and unforgiveness leading us to divorce."

We can take a stand against any negative influences in our






contrary. I was sure I was as much to blame as he, but I didn't know what to do about it. I pleaded with God on a regular basis to make my husband more sensitive, less angry, more pleasant, less irritable. But I saw few changes. Was God not listening? Or did He favor the husband over the wife, as I suspected?

After a number of years, with little change, I cried out to the Lord one day in despair, saying, "God, I can't live this way anymore. I know what You've said about divorce, but I can't live in the same house with him. Help me, Lord." I sat on the bed holding my Bible for hours as I struggled with the strongest desire to take the children and leave. I believe that because I came to God in total honesty about what I felt, He allowed me to thoroughly and clearly envision what life would be like if I left: Where I would live, how I would support myself and care for the children, who would still be my friends, and worst of all, how a heritage of divorce would affect my son and daughter. It was the most horrible and unspeakably sad picture. If I left I would find some relief, but at the price of everything dear to me. I knew it wasn't God's plan for us.

As I sat there, God also impressed upon my heart that if I would deliberately lay down my life before His throne, die to the desire to leave, and give my needs to Him, He would teach me how to lay down my life in prayer for Michael. He would show me how to really intercede for him as a son of God, and in the process He would revive my marriage and pour His blessings out on both of us. We would be better together, if we could get past this, than we could ever be separated and alone. He showed me that Michael was caught in a web from his past that rendered him incapable of being different from what he was at that moment, but God would use me as an instrument of His deliverance if I would consent to it. It hurt to say yes to this and I cried a lot. But when I did, I felt hopeful for the first time in years.

I began to pray every day for Michael, like I had never prayed






for, whether it be low self-esteem, pride, the need to be right, miscommunication, or the bowing to our own selfish desires. He will tell you lies like, “Nothing will ever change.” “Your failures are irreparable.” “There’s no hope for reconciliation.” “You’d be happier with someone else.” He’ll tell you whatever you will believe, because he knows if he can get you to believe it, there is no future for your marriage. If you believe enough lies, your heart will eventually be hardened against God’s truth.

In every broken marriage, there is at least one person whose heart is hard against God. When a heart becomes hard, there is no vision from God’s perspective. When we’re miserable in a marriage, we feel that anything will be an improvement over what we’re experiencing. But we don’t see the whole picture. We only see the way it is, not the way God wants it to become. When we pray, however, our hearts become *soft* toward God and we get a vision. We see there is hope. We have faith that He will restore all that has been devoured, destroyed, and eaten away from the marriage. “I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten” (Joel 2:25). We can trust Him to take away the pain, hopelessness, hardness, and unforgiveness. We are able to envision His ability to resurrect love and life from the deadest of places.

Imagine Mary Magdalene’s joy when she went to Jesus’ tomb the third day after He had been crucified and found that He was not dead after all, but had been raised up by the power of God. The joy of seeing something hopelessly dead brought to life is the greatest joy we can know. The power that resurrected Jesus is the very same power that will resurrect the dead places of your marriage and put life back into it. “God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power” (1 Corinthians 6:14). It’s the only power that can. But it doesn’t happen without a heart for God that is willing to gut it out in prayer, grow through tough times, and wait for love to be resurrected. We have to go through the pain to get to the joy.





and teach us how to walk through it. Enable us to rise up from this paralysis and move into the healing and wholeness You have for us.”

Don't write off the marriage. Ask God to give you a new husband. He is able to take the one you have and make him a new creation in Christ. Husbands and wives are not destined to fight, emotionally disconnect, live in marital deadness, be miserable, or divorce. We have God's power on our side. We don't have to leave our marriages to chance. We can fight for them in prayer and not give up, because as long as we are praying, there is hope. With God, nothing is ever as dead as it seems. Not even your own feelings.

### What About Me? I Need Prayer, Too.

It's natural to enter into this prayer venture wondering if your husband will ever be praying for you in the same way you're praying for him. While that would certainly be great, don't count on it. Praying for your husband will be an act of unselfish, unconditional love and sacrifice on your part. You must be willing to make this commitment knowing it is quite possible—even highly probable—that he will never pray for you in the same way. In some cases, he may not pray for you at all. You can ask him to, and you can pray for him to pray for you, but you can't demand it of him. Regardless, whether he does or doesn't is not your concern, it's God's. So release him from that obligation. If he doesn't pray for you, it's *his* loss more than yours anyway. Your happiness and fulfillment will not ride on whether he prays, it will depend on your own relationship with the Lord. Yes, wives need prayer, too. But I'm convinced we should not depend on our husbands to be the sole providers of it. In fact, looking to your husband to be your dedicated prayer partner could be a setup for failure and disappointment for both of you.

I learned that the best thing for our marriage was for me to have women prayer partners with whom I prayed every week. I now believe this is vital for any marriage. If you can find two or more



