

The Road Less Traveled – January 13, 2017

With the new year, many of us make a renewed commitment to our spiritual life. It's why each year one of the most common resolutions – after losing weight and getting into better shape – relates to our faith journeys. We resolve to read the Bible more regularly, pray more often, be more faithful in our church attendance, and so on. All of those things are good and noble resolutions, and as a pastor, I obviously am very supportive of them. If you let me know about your resolution, I would be honored to pray for you and your journey.

But this message is specifically for those of you who are married. And the message is this: the best thing you can do for your individual discipleship and for your marriage is to be on a faith journey together. I know, you attend church together. Maybe you are in a Bible study or Sunday school class together or you go on mission trips together. That's great. But I am talking about deliberately walking with Christ together on a daily basis. And sadly, most of us struggle with that.

Walking a spiritual journey together is one of the most intimate things we can do in marriage, and yet sadly too many of us fail to claim that intimacy. Growing together in Christ almost by definition – and definitely by design – draws you closer together as a couple. It both challenges and allows you to be vulnerable with each other and forges a deeper level of trust between two people who have committed their lives to each other.

Praying together is surely one of the most difficult things that you can do as a couple. I am convinced that it is the most intimate thing that we do together – even more intimate than physical intimacy. Because it is so personal, it feels awkward. To pray with someone – not just for them but truly with them – forces us to expose ourselves completely to God and, by extension, to our spouse. That kind of vulnerability does not come easy.

But hear me say this: it's natural. That awkwardness, that feeling of exposure that compels you to shy away from praying with your spouse, it's natural. And it's OK. But moving to overcome it and setting off on a path of spiritual growth together will bless you in ways that you cannot imagine.

Now you may be thinking, "Well that's easy to say; harder to do." No doubt that is true. But I speak from a place of experience. Melissa and I struggled for years to find that path together. We had many attempts that ended in failure and frustration. But we kept trying. And eventually we found it. And it has blessed our marriage and our faith journeys in ways that I never dreamed it would.

My prayer is for every couple in our church family to experience that same blessing. And so here are a few suggestions to get you started.

1. Start slowly. Don't resolve to read a whole book of the Bible together each day because you'll never sustain it. This is a brand new journey – something completely different – so think baby steps.
2. Commit to the same time each day. Maybe it's first thing in the morning or right before you go to bed. Or when you both get home from work. It doesn't matter. But set aside the time and commit to making it a time devoted to each other and to God.
3. Use a devotional guide. One of the reasons why so many of us fail to stick with a journey such as this is that we don't know where to start. Reading a few verses in the Bible and then talking about them sounds great, but it's easy to get stuck. Instead, find a good devotional that will guide you through a few verses of Scripture each day and then help you reflect on them together. There are

hundreds of couples devotionals for sale out there, but I heartily recommend two that you can find free online. The first is *Moments With You*, which you can find each day [here](#). You also can sign up to have it delivered each day via email. The second is called *One*, a marriage devotional by Jimmy Evans. It is available [here](#) and can be accessed either online or through a free app on your mobile device. Incidentally, YouVersion has literally hundreds of devotionals and Bible reading plans available, all free.

4. Pray together. It need not be lofty or long, it just needs to be honest. Begin by simply joining hands and praying silently together. If you have children, pray for them together. Eventually, as you become more comfortable, begin praying for each other and for your journey together.
5. And finally, let it happen. Vow together to stick with it. It will be hard at first. It will be awkward. But it will become more comfortable. And it won't be long before you will begin looking forward to the time together.

I pray for your shared journey.

See you Sunday.