

Spiritual Practices and Devotional Resources for Couples

Because research shows that intentional spiritual practices strengthen marriages, churches would do well to encourage couples to deepen the spiritual dimension of their relationships. Participating together in worship, Bible study, mission, and service projects helps couples deepen their understanding of God and each other. In addition, many couples find that praying together and sharing privately in the use of devotional materials strengthens their couple bond and helps keep them focused on living according to their faith. For some this may be as simple as silent or spoken prayers of gratitude while holding hands at the dinner table or when sharing a sacred moment, such as a beautiful sunset or a reunion after time apart. For those who prefer a more structured devotional time, typing “devotional resources for couples” into the search bar at www.Cokesbury.com will bring up an extensive list of titles.

In the following list of resources recommended by a variety of United Methodists, you will find some older classics, works based on particular marriage education programs, brief daily readings, and some more scholarly works. As in most things, couples are likely to differ in their levels of comfort with spiritual practices and will need to experiment, compromise, and practice consideration for each other’s feelings and needs. Neither should try to coerce the other into a particular practice, but should use their best communication skills to express their desires without attacking or belittling and to actively listen in order to truly understand each other. By deepening their mutual understanding and gently inviting each other to try something new, hopefully, over time, couples will find ways to draw closer to God and grow spiritually - both individually and together. Churches can nurture such growth by encouraging discussion of and providing resources for couple spiritual practices. Inviting couples to actually participate in such practices during counseling or small group sessions increases the likelihood that they will follow through and engage in them at home.

Devotional Resources Recommended by United Methodists

15-Minute Devotions for Couples, by Bob and Emilie Barnes (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2005). Brief selections offer Scripture passages, related devotional reading, and suggestions for activities to strengthen couple communication and intimacy.

365 Meditations for Couples, edited by Sally D. Sharpe (Nashville: Dimensions for Living, 2003). Daily selections offer scripture, a brief meditation, prayer, and “Talk it Over” topics for couples. Each month’s selection is written by a different couple.

Couples’ Devotional Bible: New International Version, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 2009). In addition to the complete text of the Bible, this volume offers helpful introductions to each book, daily devotions with “marriage builder” activities, and other helps for exploring various areas of your marriage. An index helps locate devotional readings on specific topics with which couples might need assistance.

Holy Relationships, by Christine A. Adams (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Morehouse Publishing, 1998). Approximately eighty-five brief paragraphs and scripture passages for daily readings are grouped in three sections of this book: “Guidelines for Holy Relationships,” “Practices of Holy Relationships,” and “Purposes of Holy Relationships.” Topics include forgiveness, feelings, autonomy, listening, faith, developing rituals, affirming your love, and more.

Moments with You: Daily Connections for Couples, by Dennis and Barbara Rainey (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 2007). The authors offer 365 brief Biblical devotions for couples to share, each including a daily discussion point, Scripture, and prayer. The readings, appropriate for all ages and stages of married life, are designed to help couples deepen their connection to God and each other.

Staying Connected in Your Marriage: Daily Reflections and Dialogue, by Al Francis Lacki. (Troy, Michigan: Uplift Enterprises, 2000). Designed to foster both individual and relationship growth, these daily selections are designed for individual reading and reflection, followed by couple dialogue and sharing.

The Couples Companion: Meditations and Exercises for Getting the Love You Want, by Harville Hendrix, Ph.D. and Helen Hunt, M.A. (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1994). Each of these 365 entries for cultivating spirituality in the marriage relationship begins with a quotation, offers insights, suggests an action, and ends with a faith affirmation. Content is compatible with Christian tradition and useful for couples of any faith.

The Love and Respect Experience: A Husband-Friendly Devotional That Wives Truly Love, by Emerson Eggerichs (Nashville: Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2011). Based on his Biblically-based understanding of the love desired by women and the respect needed by men, the author offers 52 devotionals designed to help couples learn how to stop and avoid the “Crazy Cycle” and enhance their efforts to show love and respect to each other.

The Love Languages Devotional Bible, by Gary Chapman (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012) The author brings together his expertise and insights from decades of counseling experience in brief devotional readings applying Scripture to real-life relationship issues. Designed to deepen couples’ understanding of God and of each other, this resource addresses such topics as expectations, communication, roles, sex, conflict, money, in-laws, children and more. Available in either hard or soft cover. A Spanish language version titled ***Biblia Devocional Los Lenguajes del Amor*** is scheduled for publication in April, 2013, by Kregel Publications.

Together Moments for Couples: Devotions to Draw You Closer, by Bob and Emilie Barnes (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2011). These devotionals are designed to help busy couples spend quality moments together focused on God and each other. The readings offer encouragement, inspiration, and practical advice to deepen the couple’s love and commitment to each other.

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