

THE MAN IN THE MIRROR A LOOK IN THE MIRROR

An equipping e-newsletter from Man in the Mirror to help you reach more men.



Becoming One Means Being Others-Centered

By Patrick Morley and David Delk

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Excerpted and adapted from *The Marriage Prayer* (Moody Publishers, Fall 2008)

How can you experience oneness in your marriage? While we will never experience perfect oneness on earth, marriage is an opportunity to give ourselves away fully to another person. The primary way to overcome barriers to oneness in your marriage is to be other-centered. Christ's love for the church is sacrificial. Paul essentially said to husbands, "Love your wife in the same way that Christ loves the church. You should be willing to give yourself up for her." (Eph. 5:25)

Most of us won't have to step in front of a bullet for our spouses, but we might very well have to take a paintball now and then. When our desire is to lash out, punish, or ignore—we need to remember the phrase from *The Marriage Prayer*, "Make us one, like You are three in one." Instead of pushing away and perpetuating a downward spiral, we need to extend grace and take small positive steps.



I've heard that before. What I need is some help actually doing it!



We all do. The truth is this: We will draw together rather than pull apart when we really believe that **loving our spouse is loving ourself**.

Why does the Bible say we should lay aside our own agendas and deny ourselves? For the same reason that Christ loved the church. Christ loved the church sacrificially to present her as a beautiful bride to God. In the same way, God has given us a unique opportunity to help our spouses become everything God wants them to be. In an environment where we lay our lives down for them, they are nourished and they can flourish.

Paul reveals the logic of this when he says, "He who loves his wife loves himself" (Ephesians 5:28).

It's tempting to read this as, "A man should love his wife like he's loving himself."

But Paul goes farther than that. He basically said, "He who loves his wife **is loving himself**." When we love our spouses, we are loving ourselves. Our union is so powerful and so real that when we sacrificially love our spouses, we really are

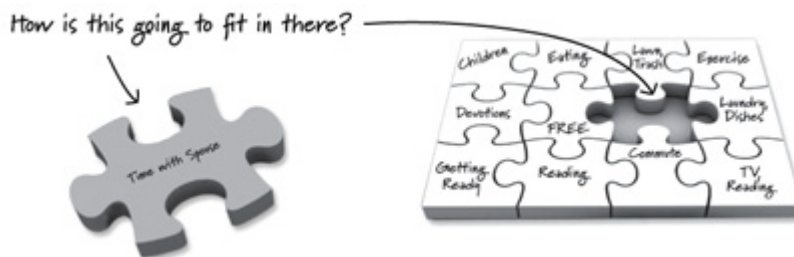
loving ourselves. That's what we were made for. That's the way we find the greatest joy and satisfaction. We were wired to create oneness by giving ourselves away for our spouses.

Becoming One by Investing Time

Unfortunately, couples are often trying to work out all the kinks in the marriage knot at the same time they are also establishing careers, a home, and a family. That makes developing oneness even harder.

Let's do a little analysis. If you sleep for eight hours each night, you will have 960 waking minutes each day.

By the time you are finished with getting ready, work, chores, children, exercise, eating, your commute and a few minutes of downtime—there's not much left for you and your spouse.



Here's the question: Would you be willing to give your spouse 2 percent of your waking hours each day? What would that look like? About twenty minutes.

Find a way to invest twenty minutes each day into the emotional and spiritual health of your spouse. Set aside twenty minutes in the morning for coffee. Or, twenty minutes in the morning to discuss the day ahead, then pray together. Or, after dinner, stick around the table for about twenty minutes and just be with one another. There is no way to experience oneness without investing in one another.

At the thirteen-year-mark in his marriage, Pat calculated that eleven of their couple friends were either separated or getting divorced. As he pondered this staggering revelation, he realized that Patsy was not his top priority after God. He viewed her basically as someone to help him achieve his dreams. He'd not considered that she might have a dream of her own. And then it hit him: he was using her. He felt dirty and ashamed, which led to genuine repentance. But he didn't know what to do—practically speaking.

Pat asked God to show him what to do. A plan began to take shape to make Patsy his best friend. After dinner, Pat started to linger at the dinner table. No agenda. Just to be with Patsy. For about twenty minutes each day, he would ask about her day, her dreams, her fears, her hopes, her concerns. He'd ask how the children were doing from her perspective.

One day a few weeks later, Pat came home from work and there was a plaque on the counter next to the bathroom sink. It says, "Happiness is being married to your best friend."

That was over twenty years ago, but he still proudly displays the "Happiness" plaque in his office. It reminds him of God's love, mercy, and grace.

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NBAS (No-Brainer Action Step)

What is something you could do together with your twenty minutes? Decide now to try it tomorrow.

Love and Oneness

In his book *The Four Loves*, C.S. Lewis describes four different varieties of love—*affection*, *friendship*, *eros*, and *charity*. First, affection is the kind of love that simply enjoys the company of our mate. Second, friendship is what happens when you and your spouse connect because of a common interest. Third, eros is the kind of love we are talking about when we say we are “in love.” Fourth, charity is selfless love that mimics the love of God.

Lewis makes two very interesting points about eros and charity. For eros, Lewis says that it is about more than sex. Sexual desire, without true eros, just wants sex. In contrast, Eros wants the beloved. “Now Eros makes a man want, not just a woman, but one particular woman. In some mysterious but quite indisputable fashion, the lover desires the beloved herself, not the pleasure she can give.”¹ In other words, “It’s not sex that I want, I want you. I want to experience true oneness with another human being. I want to know you and be known by you.” That’s what eros is all about.

Lewis describes charity as “Gift-love” that reflects the divine love God has for us. Gift-love is love that provides solely for the benefit of others and does not seek anything for itself. Through Christ, God gives us the ability to express this selfless love to others. And in the mystery of marriage, we both **need** to be loved with charity by our spouse, and we have the ability to give charity to our spouse. We experience a profound oneness through selfless love.



Tom and Susan are both in their mid-eighties and are now reaping the benefits of a lifetime of charity toward each another. They can’t get out much anymore, so their world has shrunk. Most of their time is spent at home with each another.

When you are with them the atmosphere of love and oneness is palpable. They care for each other tenderly. Tom makes sure Susan has taken her medicine. Susan helps Tom with his oxygen after he has been up and around for too long. They pray together regularly and still talk about what God is teaching them through His Word.

They are enjoying the precious reward of what we pray when we say, “Make us one, like You are three in one.”

You and your spouse could enjoy that same reward. Start praying The Marriage Prayer for each other today!



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—Patrick Morley

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Challenge - pray this prayer for 30 days and see how it impacts your marriage relationship!

Download *The Marriage Prayer* card or get more information about the book, including a sample chapter, by [clicking here](#).



Patrick Morley and David Delk

Pat is the CEO of Man in the Mirror. He and Patsy have been married for 35 years. David Delk is the President of Man in the Mirror and has been married to Ruthie for 20 years. Their newly-released book, *The Marriage Prayer* (Moody), brings biblical insights to life through true stories of real couples.

¹ C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt, 1991), 135.

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