



## Turning Toward God as a Couple by Phil & Dana Wright

"Amen I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." MT 18: 19-20

Turning to God in couple prayer was a struggle for us. We'd heard about it, we wanted it, but we couldn't quite master it on our own. We had no idea when we accepted the invitation to attend a Retorno Weekend that we were about to receive the gifts we needed to incorporate couple prayer into our relationship.

We always thought couple prayer was going to church together, praying together at mealtimes and saying our individual prayers together before we went to bed. Although, all of these types of prayer are essential, we didn't realize that couple prayer extends beyond the individual act of prayer.

When we pray as an individual, we are guided and counseled as an individual. When we pray together as a couple, we invite God into our Sacrament to reveal His will for our relationship. This is how the Sacrament of Matrimony is strengthened through couple prayer. Because our definition of couple prayer was incomplete and because we were never taught how to pray together, we struggled with couple prayer.

Just like our marriage and parenting, couple prayer doesn't come with a set of instructions. We learn how to act, parent and pray from our role models, usually our parents. Our families prayed at mealtimes and went to church regularly, but we never saw our parents pray together as a couple, and they certainly never sat down to teach us how. So when we decided to incorporate couple prayer into our relationship as a result of our Marriage Encounter Weekend, we did what we knew: we prayed individually with each other in the room.

To our surprise, we didn't get much out of the experience; except we knew what the other person was worried about and needed. We asked other couples how they prayed together and tried their way, but it never really fit for us. We seemed to be putting out a lot of effort, but not getting a lot back. It just didn't seem like we were doing it right. We both felt incapable and uncomfortable.

I, Dana, as an Organizer, feel most comfortable with new things when they come with instructions. This makes it sensible and predictable for me.

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I, Phil, as a Thinker, feel most comfortable when I understand the concept

of something new so I can feel competent in completing the task. Since we didn't have good instructions for couple

prayer and we didn't truly understand the concept, we began to avoid it altogether.

Although we avoided couple prayer, we still longed for it. Luckily, God saw our sincere efforts to include Him in our relationship and sent us a wonderful gift: an opportunity to attend a Marriage Retorno Weekend.

Although we had a million reasons not to go, like three children, lack of sleep, business travel and sickness in the family, somehow we knew we needed to attend this weekend anyway. We arrived frazzled just as the weekend started.

We were having a hard time concentrating and letting go all that we left behind. That's when God sent another gift through the weekend outline: The gift of being still and quiet, of slowing

**MARRIAGE RETORNO** is a prayer retreat available to all married couples providing an atmosphere and a context in which a couple can open themselves, both as individuals and as a couple to dialogue with God through Scriptures. It is a weekend experience for husband and wife, facilitated by a couple and a Catholic priest. It is an opportunity for participants to renew their relationship as a couple with God.

down, breathing, relaxing and listening to God and to each other. We knew we were in the right place at just the right time.

The weekend was full of special gifts, like quiet time alone, time for reflection and praise, forgiveness and healing, but the most awesome gift we received was a viable, living form of couple prayer that we could finally incorporate into our relationship.

The Retorno weekend helped expand our definition of couple prayer and make the concept clear and understandable. We were given many ways to pray as a couple from which we could choose what best fit our relationship. We now had a useful tool that allowed God to intimately guide and direct our relationship while we were both present and listening.

It was so beautiful to see couple prayer work in our marriage as it was meant to that tears welled in our eyes many times throughout the weekend. We felt closer to God as a couple than we'd ever felt before.

God touched us many times throughout that weekend, and He continues to touch us during our couple prayer time at home. We gain strength as a couple when we turn to God for answers and direction. Yes, our couple prayer sometimes comes out a little clumsy but it's no longer uncomfortable or avoided. In fact, we look forward to spending intimate couple time with our Heavenly Father; it's familiar, calming and reassuring... like coming home.

*In addition to maintaining the Worldwide Marriage Encounter web site, Phil and Dana Wright are Matrimony's web site managers and a Weekend presenting team. Dana and Phil are married 10 years and were Encountered in June, 1998. They live in Chandler, AZ with their children, Jessie, Amanda and Bret.*