

Men-2-Pray: When my wife and I misunderstand each other!

This must be one of the most sensitive topics a person could broach! Yet it is such a fundamental reality in many marriages. Sometimes two people are almost constantly at cross purposes, so much so that they don't even want to talk to each other, let alone pray together; they don't know what to pray anymore! How do I pray when my wife and I have reached this point? The following guidelines might help you disentangle yourself from this mare's nest.

1. **Don't defend yourself!** One thing that never works is hurling arguments, 'proof' and 'logical reasoning' at each other. Keep quiet and wait, but remember there's a vast difference between a brooding silence and simply saying nothing and waiting. This is most probably the most difficult of all – not defending yourself and not pointing out your partner's faults to her all the time. Arguments don't work; they simply rehash old patterns that you are both only too familiar with. Pray and ask the Lord to help you keep quiet – long enough for you to hear your wife's heart and emotions through everything, and not only the words that come from her mouth. Only the Holy Spirit can show you this. Don't decide for yourself what is in her heart and what she should be experiencing emotionally. Allow her to express herself in her own way and ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand her.
2. **Learn to say you're sorry sooner!** One of a man's greatest challenges is to say we're sorry. We normally think once we do that our wives are going to start ruling over us. Actually just the opposite happens if we do it the right way. If your wife experiences the way you behave towards her in a certain way, your intention is not important. If you want to do things the right way, you must focus on how she experiences your behaviour. It is in cases like these that you should explain very clearly to her that you are sorry she experienced it in such a way. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you specifically what it is you do that make her misunderstand your intentions. Make sure your intentions are pure.
3. **Allow her to lean on you.** Don't try to change your wife into someone you want her to be. God made her unique. Don't begrudge her the privilege of being her own person. Ask the Lord to show you how to support her. Support her in the things she dreams about, and become involved in a practical way to help her achieve what is important to her. Ask the Lord what things you should pay attention to and what things are important to her.
4. **Crucify the 'self' in you.** A big stumbling block in a marriage is our so-called 'rights'. We men readily argue that we also have the right to do this or that – golf, rugby, watching the news and other things we enjoy doing. Often however this is at the expense of our wives and the rest of the family. Ask the Holy Spirit to point out to you the things in your life that are so important to you that you see them as a 'right' and won't budge an inch, no matter what the consequences on the relationships in your family. If you can't first die to yourself, how can you expect your wife to do it?
5. **Bless her.** When there is conflict between the two of you, don't ask God to show your wife everything she does wrong. Simply start blessing your wife. It sounds like a hopeless task and something that can't really change anything. But simply start praying and say, "Lord I bless my wife." And keep it up. Go and pray it there where you are alone. Pray over and over again until you can pray it with all your heart. Allow the Holy Spirit to work in you.
6. **Don't complain to God about her.** When the sins of our wives are very obvious, we can tend to 'bring charges' against them to God. We tell Him everything they do wrong, or rather what we think they do wrong. As priests it is not our task to blame and accuse our wives, but to plead with God for grace and

mercy for them. If we do this only to make life easier for us, our motives are wrong. Pray for your wife for the sake of your wife.

7. **First put your own house in order.** In times of conflict it is best to first of all ask God to show you, through His Holy Spirit, any sin and any thoughtless act from your side. You will find (almost) without exception that there are also a number of things in your own heart that you will have to put right.
8. **Ask for God's love for you and your wife!** Ask the Holy Spirit to pour the love of God into your heart so that you may love your wife with God's love. God's love is love that loves in spite of what the other one has done, love at your own expense and to the other person's advantage.
9. **Set your judgment aside.** Don't appoint yourself as judge. God is the judge. Do not condemn. The judgment is God's. Your task as husband is firstly to love unconditionally, as priest to kneel in supplication before God for your wife, to bless her and to call out the Name of the Lord over her (**Num.6:24-26**).
10. **Patience!** Read **1 Pet.3:7**: Be patient with your wife. Very patient!

Only when we worked through all these issues in prayer, we are ready to enter into a meaningful discussion with our wife.