It isn’t something we hear much about. Haven’t seen many books about it. Haven’t heard any preachers preach about it. And yet, it’s probably one of the most important issues in a Christian couple’s relationship...Spiritual intimacy.

We hear a lot about physical intimacy -- the uninhibited sharing of ourselves through our bodies. All one has to do is turn on the television set. And emotional intimacy -- the open sharing of our feelings with each other -- has a more prominent profile than it used to. But...spiritual intimacy? What’s that?

If you don’t quite know what we’re talking about, you’re not alone. Charlie and Martha Shedd say, according to their studies, only 4% of all Christian couples pray together on any kind of regular basis (not including grace before meals). Shocked? This includes pastors and missionaries. Now are you shocked? We’re shocked. No, we’re broken hearted!

Most couples have just never been taught how important it is.

A few years ago, we took our own survey on spiritual intimacy. We think most couples have just never been taught how important it is. So, we want to take this opportunity to explain to you what spiritual intimacy is, what you will get out of it, and how you can get it. (By the way, our survey ran about 10% praying together.)

First of all, let’s think about what spiritual intimacy is. What are its ingredients? We think it has seven dimensions.

1. Shared purpose and goals in life. God says He has a purpose for us as a couple...we are to show the world what Christ’s relationship with His church looks like. And beyond that, He has a very special, unique plan for us to fulfill. This gives our relationship great significance. A shared purpose in our life together is the first element of spiritual intimacy. (Philippians 2:1-2; Amos 3:3)

2. Sharing the Word and prayer. This is what we usually think of when someone mentions spiritual intimacy. It’s not ALL of it, but it is a very important part of it. Jesus said there is power when two people pray in His name. What a resource of power we have in praying together as a couple! We’d be crazy not to use such a wonderful resource! Matthew 18:19, 20 — Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.

And we are commanded to “let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly” (Colossians 3:16). Together let God’s Word reach deep inside and change you both into the image of His Son. This is part of how He does that.

3. Shared growth in Christ. In Hebrews 10:24, God commands us to spur each other on to growth in our Christian lives. We sometimes forget this means our spouse, as well as the people at church. God puts us together to help each other grow into the character of His Son. That is part of spiritual intimacy. (Ephesians 5:19)

4. Shared faith, even through tough times — holding on together. And tough times will come! In our 50+ years together, we’ve faced a lot of life’s hardness together. But the rope that holds us intact (as a couple and as a person) has three strands. And that strong rope can not easily be broken. (Galatians 6:2; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)

5. Shared ministry. What’s Chuck Swindoll’s wife’s name? That’s right...Cynthia. What’s Jim Dobson’s wife’s name? Yes...Shirley. Do you know why you remember their names? Because they share their husbands’ ministries. Now, we share a ministry — GTO. But even when we’re ministering in different ways, we still are sharing each other’s ministry...praying, giving ideas, helping each other work things through. God wants to use us as individuals, but He also wants to use us as a couple. Ever
heard of Priscilla and Aquila?
Read Acts 18, and follow their
exciting lives as they ministered
together, with an open home, for
the Lord. And then look at
Romans 16:3-4 and 1 Corinthians
16:19. How grateful Paul was for
them...and how much we, as
gentile believers, owe them!

Acts 18:24-26 — Meanwhile a
Jew named Apollos...came to
Ephesus ...He began to speak
boldly in the synagogue. When
Priscilla and Aquila heard him,
they invited him to their home and
explained to him the way of God
more adequately.

Rom. 16:3,4 — Greet Priscilla
and Aquila, my fellow workers in
Christ Jesus. They risked their
lives for me. Not only I but all the
churches of the Gentiles are
grateful to them.

I Cor. 16:19 — Aquila and
Priscilla greet you warmly in the
Lord, and so does the church that
meets at their house.

6. Shared hope of eternity
together with Christ. Take a long,
hard look at that person you
married. If you are both
Christians, then you are going to
spend all eternity with her or him.
We have a shared hope that we’ll
be together with Christ forever. 1
John is very plain that if we have
this hope in us, we will be serious
about the job of diligently
purifying ourselves, inside our
front doors as well as outside
them. (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18;
1 John 3:2b-3)

7. Sharing at the core of our
being — complete transparency
before God and one another. We
hear a lot about bonding
nowadays. Well, this is real
bonding. Because as we share
ourselves with each other and
God, a strong trust grows between
us. And trust is the basic
ingredient of our relationship. It’s
the foundation that everything else
is built upon. (Acts 24:16; James
5:16)

Everybody wins when you
grow in spiritual intimacy: you,
your mate, your children. It builds
trust in your relationship and in
your home. It bonds you together.
It means you’ll be able to hold on,
whatever life throws at you. It
gives your relationship endurance
and steadfastness. And it gives
you confidence that your marriage
is significant...that God has great
plans for you as a couple.

But where do you start in this
process of spiritual intimacy?
Probably the best place to start is
to covenant with one another to
read God’s Word and pray
together at least three times a
week. If you do this faithfully, the
rest can grow from there.

We talked about how to make a
covenant in our last Seeds for
Growth. But let us refresh your
memory. Just remember that in
order to make this binding
agreement work, you must POPA.
That is, have a PLAN to
accomplish having devotions
together (time, place etc.).
OBLIGATE yourselves to work
the plan. PROMISE to keep the
covenant (Ecclesiastes 5:4). And,
finally, make yourselves
ACCOUNTABLE to each other to
hold to your agreement. That’s
POPA.

Do you want spiritual intimacy
in your marriage? Do you want
all its benefits? Then it’s time to
decide to DO something about it
today.