

Pursuing Spiritual Intimacy
Pursuing Spiritual Intimacy as a Couple

➤ **SPIRITUAL INTIMACY** – What is it?

1. Shared _____ and _____ in life

If [since] you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if [since] any comfort from his love, if [since] any fellowship with the Spirit, if [since] any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose (Philippians 2:1,2).

Can two walk together except they be agreed? (Amos 3:3)

2. Sharing the _____ and _____

For those couples who:

1. _____ the Bible together regularly
2. _____ together regularly
3. _____ church together regularly

The divorce rate is 1 in 1287 - That's less than 1/10 of 1 %!!!

3. Shared hope of _____ together with Christ

But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure (1 John 3:2b-3).

4. Shared _____ in Christ

*And let us consider how we may **spur** one another on toward love and good deeds. (Hebrews 10:24)*

5. Shared _____

Find the answers to these questions as you read the following Scriptures:

- ▶ How was Priscilla and Aquila's home open and available for ministry to others? To whom was their home open?
- ▶ How did they share together in ministry?
- ▶ How do we know they were willing to move and sacrifice for the sake of ministry to others?

Acts 18: (1) After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. (2) There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontes, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, (3) and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them....(11) So Paul stayed for a year and a half teaching them the Word of God....

(18b) Then he left the brothers and sailed for Syria accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila....(19) They arrived at Ephesus where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila....

(24) Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos...came to Ephesus ...(26) He began to speak boldly in the synagogue (25b) but he only knew John's baptism. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.(27) When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. On arriving, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed.For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

...Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house. (1 Corinthians 16:19)

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. Greet also the church that meets at their house. (Romans 16:3-5)

6. Sharing at the _____ of our being

So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man. (Acts 24:16)

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.... (James 5:16)

7. Shared _____ even when it's tough

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2).

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly [easily] broken. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)

➤ _____ together to do it.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____ the Covenant!

➤ **Prayer of Commitment**

O God, we want to grow in spiritual intimacy and to be Your team. We commit ourselves to spend regular time together in Your Word and in prayer. Help us be faithful in this commitment, and show us how to be accountable to one another to do it. Make us a strong, three-stranded rope that will never break. We ask this in the strong name of Jesus, Amen!

➤ **Conclusion**

Now that you know these things, DO THEM. That is the path of blessing. (John 13:17 LB)

➤ **Couple Sharing**

1. If you are not reading and praying together regularly, then structure a Covenant to do so. Include the plan and a means of accountability. If you already are reading and praying together, structure a covenant for one of the other elements of Spiritual Intimacy.
2. Do the devotion at the end of the Listening Guide together

Couples' Devotional Study Shared Growth in Christ

You and your mate are walking down the road together. You're sharing with him/her all that good stuff from Philippians 2 you packed in your suitcase: comfort, love, tenderness, compassion, etc. You are reading the Scriptures and praying together as you walk. Jesus Christ has become someone easy to talk about. Now, as you walk along, you find yourself growing stronger spiritually, with more energy and stamina than before. This, dear friends, *should* be a natural progression.

But what should be natural to the "new creature in Christ" is often radically **unnatural** to our "old self." Our hearts want to obey God's life-giving principles of love and compassion, but they sometimes end up in the bottom of our suitcase. And what are those **old rags** on top? Bitterness and criticism. Every time you open your emotional suitcase, you must make a conscious choice to push aside the rags and rummage for the love and compassion. But each time you choose love and compassion makes it easier to find them in your suitcase the next time. For **God is at work** within us. He is the One who helps us discard the rags and choose the garments of righteousness as described in Philippians 2.

We have sometimes heard a wife or husband say something like, "My mate isn't growing in the Lord [like me]. I beg [nag and badger] him/her all the time to come to Bible study with me, but he/she just isn't interested." That spouse seems to be taking Hebrews 10:24, *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds*, to actually mean, 'And let us consider how we may **badger** one another' or '...how we may **criticize** one another....' (There are those old **rags** again.)

The word in that verse is **SPUR**. A simple little word that means *to stimulate, to rouse to action*. Nagging is not spurring. Badgering is not spurring. Criticizing is not spurring. So how do we **spur** our traveling partner?

Sometimes, the best way to spur is to duck. That's right — **duck!** Our tendency is to try to grow *for* our mate rather than allowing them to grow at their own rate. We tell them what they should do, what they should think, even what they should feel. We have their growth pattern all planned and get very upset when they don't keep our schedule.

Our advice is *duck*. Although we think we are helping, sometimes our good intentions cause us to actually stand **between** our mate and God. So duck! You have to get out of the way so God can get a good shot at your mate.

This is not meant as condemnation upon you in any way. Your *intent* is not to hinder, but to help. But in reality, your action may be accomplishing the very opposite of what you really want. Ask yourself, "Is what I am doing working?" If not, then it is time to try something else: a closed mouth, soft answers, sweet smiles, and lots and lots of prayer. **That** is ducking. And when you duck, God, can work on your mate.

As you continue down the road together — *allowing* one another to grow — try applying Ephesians 5:19 to your daily journey. *Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord.* We have some friends in San Jose, California who used to sing (they may still be singing) road signs to the tune of the "Alleluia Chorus." "Mer-ging traf-fic. Mer-ging traf-fic. Mer-ging tra-a-af-fic." They say it really helped shorten trips.

Yeah, well...maybe not road signs, but there are lots of edifying songs you can sing together, from familiar old hymns to the new praise songs. It's a good habit to get into.

Whenever the Gillogly's went on family vacations, we would sing together most of the way. We'd go through the alphabet singing songs whose titles matched each letter, with everyone taking a turn. Or we would spell H-O-R-S-E (or some other animal) with children's choruses. Even now that our family is grown and it's just the two of us, we sing together: in the car, during our devotions and when we paint or clean up the yard or take walks.

When we sing songs together like

*You are my hiding place
You always fill my heart
With songs of deliverance
Whenever I am afraid
I will trust in you*

What do you think that does to our faith as we remind ourselves in song of God's faithfulness?
That must be why God commanded us to do it!

Rate your experience of Sharing Growth in Christ in your relationship on a scale of 1 to 10.

Wife: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (circle one)

Husband: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (circle one)

What could you do to spur each other on the right way to growth in Christ?

Wife: _____

Husband: _____

Discuss your responses together.

REFLECT TOGETHER: Read Hebrews 10:19-25. Do you have to obey verse 23 before you can do verse 24?

PRAY TOGETHER: Oh, Jesus, we want to live in Your word and let it live in us. Show us ways to encourage one another to grow in You.