



Of Seeds and Flowers



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Spiritual People Make Better Spouses

by Michael Obsatz, Ph.D.

When I work with couples who communicate well, share joy, and have a deep commitment to each other, I've learned that most of these couples have a strong spiritual life. Often, I see how these couples live, and work and relax more deeply and honestly than other couples. I have discovered that a commitment to one's spirituality makes a person a better husband or wife. Here are some of the virtues and gifts that a strong spirituality bring to marriage.

- 1. Spirituality leads to humility.** Spiritual people know they are not God. They can admit their mistakes and don't have to be right all the time. They are willing to compromise, to forgive, no brooding over injuries. They don't try to control others and are willing to surrender to a higher purpose. (See "A Drop of Rain" on the next page)
- 2. Spiritual people are compassionate.** People who believe in the unity of all of creation believe that other people's feelings are as important as their own. Therefore, in marriage, spirituality leads to empathy, concern for others, and a commitment that goes beyond oneself. "I" is the smallest word in the English language.
- 3. They experience joy in being alive.** While there is an acknowledgement of pain and suffering, spiritually oriented people see the joy in everyday experiences.- IN LIFE . They understand that pain and suffering are not the last word. J - o - y. J=JESUS, O=OTHERS, Y=YOURSELF.
- 4. Spiritually focused people have hope.** Along with joy, they believe that good can come out of pain and difficulties and they have hope in the future. As air is to the physical life, hope is to the spiritual life.
- 5. Spiritual people know how to forgive.** Experiencing God's gift of grace and forgiveness, spiritual people don't expect perfection from others. They can accept the human limitations of their spouse and love their spouse with them.
- 6. They are not totally dependent on their spouse.** Since spiritually-oriented people have something greater than people as the cornerstone of their lives, namely God, they don't rely on their spouse to give them everything. They know God loves them for who they are, and therefore don't feel empty and needy all the time.
- 7. They develop discernment, and when they trust, they trust completely.** Spiritual discernment recognizes the difference between words and deeds. Those who are spiritually committed learn to discern those who are trustworthy and then trust them with their whole heart.
- 8. Spiritually oriented people have self-discipline and a feeling of accountability.** Focusing on spirituality requires commitment, discipline and being responsible for the consequences of one's own life. This leads to emotional maturity in relationships. Prayer changes things, mainly ME!!
- 9. Spiritual people realize that life is a journey, and see themselves in process.** Because of this, they understand how people can grow from suffering and adversity. They don't expect to be perfect for their spouse or for their spouse to be perfect for them. They tend to see the larger picture. They give permission to be imperfect and time to change and grow!
- 10. Spiritual people know how to love.** Since the essence of spirituality is about loving, spiritual people try to turn the negative into love. They love God, themselves, and others. They develop a loving attitude, which means they are not infatuated with love, but they see the relationship between love, work and... Cont. on back page.

A DROP OF RAIN...A BIT OF SUN

I have never been very enthused about novenas but a priest friend of mine sent me the following novena that I found much different. It was given to Father Dolindo Routolo (1882-1970), **by Jesus Himself**. Fr. Routolo, like St. Padre Pio, had the wounds of Christ (Stigmata) in his hands. God worked many miracles through him.

ALL of the self-help programs that bring true results ALWAYS include a demand to surrender to a HIGHER POWER or they don't work. This novena is perfect psychology, great theology and wonderful spirituality, **ALL in one package**. I hope it will be an instrument that you will pray, over and over again, to touch and transform your life.

NOVENA

Day 1. Why do you confuse yourselves by worrying? Leave the care of your affairs to me and everything will be peaceful. I say to you in truth that every act of true, blind, complete surrender to me produces the effect that you desire and resolves all difficult situations.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Day 2. Surrender to me does not mean to fret, to be upset, or to lose hope, nor does it mean offering to me a worried prayer asking me to follow you and change your worry into prayer. All of this is against true surrender, it is deeply against it to worry, to be nervous and to desire to think about the consequences of anything. It is like the confusion that children feel when they ask their mother to see to their needs, and then try to take care of those needs for themselves so that their childlike efforts get in their mother's way. Surrender means to placidly close the eyes of the soul, to turn away from thoughts of tribulation and to put yourself in my care, so that only I act, saying, "You take care of it."

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Day 3. How many things I do when the soul, in so much spiritual and material need turns to me, looks at me and says to me; "*You take care of it, then close its eyes and rests.*" In pain you pray for me to act, but that I act in the way you want. You do not turn to me; instead, you want me to adapt to your ideas. You are not sick people who ask the doctor to cure you, but rather sick people who tell the doctor how to heal. So do not act this way, but pray as I taught you in the Our Father: "*Hallowed be thy Name*", that is, be glorified in my need. "*Thy kingdom come*", that is, let all that is in us and in the world be in accord with your kingdom. "*Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven*", that is, in our need, decide as you see fit for our temporal and eternal life. If you say to me truly: "*Thy will be done*". Which is the same as saying: You take care of it. I will intervene with all my omnipotence, and I will resolve the most difficult situations.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Day 4. You see evil growing instead of weakening? Do not worry, Close your eyes and say to me with faith: "*Thy will be done, You take care of it*". I say to you that I will take care of it, and that I will intervene as does a doctor; and I will accomplish miracles when they are needed. Do you see that the sick person is getting worse? Do not be upset, but close your eyes and say "*You take care of it.*" I say to you that I will take care of it, and that there is no medicine more powerful than my loving intervention. By my love, I promise this to you.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Day 5. And when I must lead you on a path different from the one you see, I will prepare you; I will carry you in my arms; I will let you find yourself, like children who have fallen asleep in their mother's arms, on the other bank of the river. What troubles you and hurts you immensely are your reason, your thoughts and worry, and your desire at all costs to deal with what afflicts you.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Day 6. You are sleepless; you want to judge everything, direct everything and see to everything and you surrender to human strength, or worse- to men themselves, trusting in their intervention. This is what hinders my words and my vision of reality. Oh how much I wish this surrender from you so I can help you and how I suffer when I see you so agitated! Satan tries to do exactly this: to agitate you and to remove you from my protection and to throw you into the jaws of human initiative. So, trust only in me, rest in me, surrender to me in everything.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Day 7. I perform miracles in proportion to your full surrender to me and to your not thinking of yourselves. I sow treasure troves of graces when you are in the deepest poverty. No person of reason, no thinker, has ever performed miracles, not even among the saints. He does divine works whosoever surrenders to God. So don't think about it anymore, because your mind is so busy and for you it is very hard to see hidden motives and to trust in me and to not think of yourself. Do this for all your needs, do this all of you and you will see great, continual, silent miracles. I will take care of things, I promise this to you.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Day 8. Close your eyes and let yourself be carried away on the flowing current of my grace; close your eyes and do not think of the present, turn your thoughts away from the future just as you would from temptation. *Repose in me, believing in my goodness,* and I promise you, by my love, that if you say *"You take care of it. I will take care of it all; I will console you, liberate you and guide you."*

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Day 9. Pray always in readiness to surrender, and you will receive from it great peace and great reward, even when I confer on you the grace of self-giving, of repentance and of love. Then what does suffering matter? Does it seem impossible to you? Close your eyes and say with all your soul, *Jesus, you take care of it.* Do not be afraid; I will take care of things and you will bless my name by humbling yourself. A thousand prayers cannot equal on single act of surrender, remember this well. There is no novena more effective than this one.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

ALL THE FLOWERS OF ALL THE TOMORROWS ARE IN THE SEEDS OF TODAY!

Have you ever wondered about the wonderful things that never happened in your life because you were not prepared to receive them?

An angel was walking down the street carrying a torch in one hand and a pail of water in the other. A woman asked the angel, "What are you going to do with the torch and with the pail?" The angel said, "With torch I am going to burn down the mansions of heaven and with the pail I am going to put out the fires of hell. **THEN WE SHALL SEE WHO REALLY LOVES GOD.**"

Our religious/spiritual lives have been so pushed by good/bad, sin/grace, heaven/hell, reward/punishment that we have forgotten it IS ABOUT LOVE. First, God's love for us (swimming in His love, being overwhelmed by grace which is God's very life in us) and then our LOVE FOR HIM/HER. Sin management became the purpose of the clergy rather than the marvelous work of transformation that we see in Jesus. "Church largely became a "worthiness and attainment system" managed from without, instead of a transformational system awakening us from within." Rohr.



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continued from front... responsibility. PRIORITIES: God, spouse, children, career, then all else. NEVER LET YOUR CAREER BECOME MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOUR VOCATION!!!!

11. They don't need things to make them happy. "Everything you own, owns you! Those who focus on their spiritual growth know that things are passing. The material world in which we live and everything that it contains, for all its beauty and natural wonder, THEY REALIZE IS NOT THE GOAL OF OUR LIFE. They are not insatiable and do not try to fill themselves up by having the latest fashions or inventions. As a result, they focus on the meaning of life rather than on possessions. Remember: Jesus washed the feet of the Apostles, then said **"HAPPINESS WILL BE YOURS IF YOU GO AND ACT IN LIKE MANNER."**

SPEAKING SOFTLY

The great French naturalist Jean-Henri Fabre once conducted a fascinating experiment with processionary caterpillars, so called because they tend to march in unison. He lined them around the inner edge of a flowerpot and then monitored them carefully as they marched in a circle. At the end of the third day, he placed some pine needles, which is the favorite food of the caterpillars, in the center of the pot. They continued walking for four more days without breaking rank, finally, one at a time, they rolled over and died of starvation, just inches from their ideal food source.

Sounds like today's psychologists, counselors, leaders of our institutions as they go round and round afraid to speak the truth, loud and clear about the breakdown of the American family. We've gotten the kids we deserve. We've gotten the congress we deserve; we've gotten the culture we deserve.

"EVERYONE IS AFRAID TO SPEAK A NEW THING; EVERYONE IS AFRAID TO DO A NEW THING." Dostoevsky
"If a man or woman spends all of their time on the hillside tending the sheep sooner or later they will begin to ask themselves, "What do the sheep think of me?" -and little by little they will begin to thinking and acting like they believe the sheep want them to think and act." Nietzsche

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