



BARE MARRIAGE

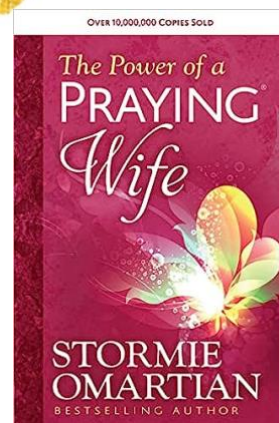
HEALTHY, EVIDENCE-BASED, BIBLICAL ADVICE FOR SEX & MARRIAGE

with Sheila Wray Gregoire

The Power of a Praying Wife

(2014 Edition; over 10,000,000 copies sold of all editions)

Stormie Omartian



SYNOPSIS

A fulfilling marriage can seem like an impossible dream. But God can do the impossible if we just ask Him and pray.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

- Grew out of the ongoing abuse Omartian suffered in her own marriage (15). Rather than set boundaries or seek safety for herself and her children, Omartian chose to pray.
- Frames prayer as the key to changing a marriage, even a destructive one with alcoholism or abuse, placing the responsibility for ending a husband's destructive behaviors on the wife.
- Declares women responsible for the home and family, even if they work outside the home, while insisting that women must also provide frequent sex regardless of what else is happening in the marriage.

HAS A DISTORTED VIEW OF HOW PRAYER IMPROVES A MARRIAGE

- Ignores free will by framing a wife's prayers as the answer to a husband's bad behavior. Yet God does not override people's choices. While acknowledging this briefly (69 & Day 30), the rest of the book paints prayer as the solution.
- Places responsibility for fixing the husband's bad behavior on the wife's prayer life: "You can submit to God in prayer whatever controls your husband – alcoholism, workaholic laziness, depression, infirmity, abusiveness, anxiety, fear or failure – and pray for him to be released from it." (15)
- Absolves men of the need to change, since the prayer process makes women more likely to put up with bad behavior. "When Michael became angry, instead of reacting negatively, I prayed for him." (17) Says that even in cases of abuse, "the most effective tool in transforming him may be your own transformation" (p. 24).
- Implies prayer can heal trauma (141), depression, (156), anxiety (157), and suicidal ideation (157) without mentioning the necessity of evidence-based trauma and mental health therapies.

GLOSSES OVER ABUSE

- Blames herself for her husband's rages: "I was sure I was as much to blame as he, but I didn't know what to do about it." (15) Despite her testimony that prayer transformed her abusive marriage, her husband opens the book joking that Stormie has been miserable all forty years of their marriage, while he has been blessed (p. 10).
- Equates abuse with more minor issues: "A husband can hurt your feelings, be inconsiderate, uncaring, abusive, irritating or negligent" (p. 13). Whether the husband is abusive or merely irritating, the answer is always prayer.
- Declares a woman's anger at being abused as equivalent to the abuse, and requires forgiveness of abuse before prayers will work: "This whole requirement [a pure heart] is especially hard when you feel your husband has sinned against you with unkindness, lack of respect, indifference, irresponsibility, infidelity, abandonment, cruelty or abuse. But God considers the sins of unforgiveness, anger, hatred, self-pity, lovelessness or revenge to be just as bad as any others." (25)
- Minimizes emotional abuse of children (163), and doesn't mention getting children to safety.

PORTRAYS TOXIC VIEW OF WOMEN'S RESPONSIBILITIES IN MARRIAGE

- Insinuates the survival of the marriage lays with the wife. "I will not allow anything to destroy my marriage" (p. 14). "You have to trust that...abuse...infidelity ...can be relieved of its death grip. You have to determine that everything

consuming you and your husband, such as workaholism, alcoholism, drug abuse, or depression, can be destroyed” (18). However, a woman does not unilaterally have the power to save a destructive marriage. An abusive or addicted person can destroy a marriage all on his (or her) own.

- Encourages “shut up and pray” (29) and “stay out of His way” (107) instead of encouraging women to set clear boundaries and learn to speak up. This goes against best practices for changing destructive marriages.
- States that a wife is ultimately responsible for the home and the children (34), and places burdens on the wife to live up to an unrealistic ideal if she wants her prayers answered: “[Y]ou will also be expected to be sexually appealing, a good cook, a great mother, and physically, emotionally, and spiritually fit. It’s overwhelming to most women, but the good news is that you don’t have to do it on your own. You can seek God’s help.” (34). *This is said unironically, not as an indictment of pressure put on women.*
- Advises women to take men’s toxic and entitled behavior in stride. Whether a husband asks for lamb chops for dinner, but then changes his mind after you have inconvenienced yourself to accommodate him (36); or makes important business decisions without your agreement (93), or is a workaholic who spends weekends on hobbies rather than with the family (126), the solution is acceptance and prayer.
- Frames sex as a male entitlement and a female obligation, focused on a man’s release rather than something mutual, intimate, and pleasurable for both: “for a husband, sex is pure need. His eyes, ears, brain, and emotions get clouded if he doesn’t have that release.”

HEALTHY SEXUALITY RUBRIC SCORE: 17/48*

INFIDELITY & LUST: 11/16 | PLEASURE 3/16 | MUTUALITY 3/16

*FOR FULL RESULTS, VISIT [BAREMARRIAGE.COM/GSR-RUBRIC](https://baremarriage.com/gsr-rubric)

WHAT WOMEN HAVE SAID

- “I was sure I could pray him out of porn and all the damage from his first 2 marriages. The book only made me feel more responsible for failing in my prayer life, as well as my new role as wife, when none of the prayers were answered in the affirmative.” *Email from a reader, mid 60s.*
- “I prayed and prayed and prayed and prayed. Things only got worse. The Power of a Praying Wife made me believe my prayers could somehow change his free will. It messed me up because I thought my prayers weren’t effective, which led me to believe I was doing Christianity wrong.” *Social Media commenter*
- “When I first read the book and prayed the prayers, I thought it was helpful. I think that’s because I felt like I was doing the only thing I could—to pray. It was really just this sense of hope that everything would soon be “fixed.” The reality? There were still addiction issues over the years. What actually helped was being exposed to licensed counselors and their resources about setting boundaries, and realizing I didn’t have to tolerate harmful and unhealthy behaviors to be a good wife. The concept of praying for your husband certainly isn’t bad, but it’s crazy to think we can basically override someone’s free will by praying hard enough.” *Social Media commenter*

SYNOPSIS OF FINDINGS

Prayer is a powerful and vital part of the Christian life, but we must keep prayer in its proper perspective. God does not override free will; and in cases of destructive marriages, emphasis must be placed on getting people to safety, setting appropriate boundaries, and seeking evidence-based help. This book, even if unintentionally, puts the burden on women in destructive marriages to fix those marriages through prayer, and can easily result in women feeling more guilt, and enduring more abuse, because they think the problem is not the husband’s behavior but the fact that they aren’t praying enough or praying properly.



INSTEAD OF POWER OF A PRAYING WIFE, CHOOSE... Boundaries in Marriage (Cloud and Townsend); The Emotionally Destructive Marriage (Vernick); Is It Me? Making Sense of Your Confusing Marriage (Hoffman); Every Moment Holy: New Liturgies for Daily Life (McKelvey).