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FINDING DEEPER SPIRITUAL
INTIMACY IN MARRIAGE

Every KISS Is a PRAYER

BY JOSEPH AND CYNTHIA WARREN

Recently, I was blessed to see and hear Oral Roberts Sr. eulogize his wife, Evelyn, 88, after 67 years of marriage. I was moved to tears as he honestly and lovingly remembered his lifelong spiritual companion. He shared the many challenges common to Christian marriages but emphasized the spiritual meanings of kissing for Christian couples.

After 33 years of marriage to Cynthia, I am learning that the many ways of developing and restoring spiritual intimacy are best begun and ended with a kiss. The act of gently kissing can mean acceptance, appreciation, reassurance, and forgiveness.

Our contemporary Christian home with two wage earners is often hectic, rushed, and unpredictable. Schedules established for family worship, meal times, and recreation are overrun by the urgencies of health issues, job related demands, and sheer exhaustion. Without the Sabbath, I doubt our marriage could have survived 33 years. Faithful observance of the Sabbath reverses the world's attacks on our spiritual bonding and marriage.

In the best of times, our joint spiritual development includes hosting an in-home prayer group, sharing the Sabbath school lesson, worship services, and stimulating spiritual debates. Often we share revelations from times of individual devotion. Whenever one of us states, "Guess what the Spirit said to me today," there is a sense of expectancy. By miraculous changes in personal attitudes and behaviors, God continually moves our marriage to the "next same page."

Recently, the Spirit intervened on an irreconcilable issue. Rather than an "until death do us part" impasse, we

are in "one accord." As Oral Robert's eulogy implied, there are all kinds of kisses between married persons, but no kiss can compare to the joy and power captured in the "kiss of agreement." I agree.

In the worst of times, our spiritual growth is neglected for the "cares of this life" and television viewing. There seems no end to the needs of our three children, aging parents, and a host of friends and relatives. These obligations don't include two careers, two homes, six vehicles, and a collection of unused things. As the day starts, we are too rushed for spiritual bonding or a good-bye kiss. As the day ends, we collapse in front of televisions in different rooms with no desire for communication or spiritual renewal. On days like this, I recall Oral and Evelyn Robert's secret to lifelong spiritual intimacy: every kiss is a prayer.

Oral Roberts stated that he and Evelyn never went to sleep without a good-night kiss. Now I understand why. A gentle morning kiss invites God to do His will in the marriage. A little peck at midday, even over the phone, is God's assurance He will "build the home." The last kiss of the day is the prayer of faith that God will improve the spiritual intimacy and the relationship with "joy in the morning." Oral and Evelyn rooted their spiritual life in the promise that Jesus is present when couples agree and "seal it with a kiss."

As Evelyn slipped away in death, Oral gave his dearly beloved a "see you later kiss." A "prayer kiss" that Jesus will soon transport them from their graves to their eternal home.

Joseph Warren is an associate professor of English at Andrews University and Cynthia is a junior high teacher in Coloma, Michigan. They founded Spring Hope Ministries, a resource group for family life and men's ministries. They may be contacted at warren@andrews.edu or (269) 471-5015.