

# PRAYING ABOUT THINGS WE CAN'T TALK ABOUT

Conversations between friends and relatives who have different political persuasions have gotten more difficult, even impossible. Holiday gatherings have sometimes become very hard. It seems there are topics that we just can't discuss with one another, because emotions get too hot too quickly. But even though we may not be able to talk about certain things, maybe we can pray together about them. This tool provides one framework to try that.

1. Start by saying something like this to one another: *"I respect you, and I want to find a way to pray together with you about something we disagree strongly about."*
2. Together, name the issue that you're disagreeing about. State it in **neutral terms**.
3. Person A identifies their **primary worry**: what it is about the issue that gets them worked up. Phrase this in this way: "I don't want \_\_\_\_\_ to happen." This is called **Primary Worry A**.
4. Both people work together to rephrase **Primary Worry A** into something they can both agree on. **The goal is to find the core worry, phrased in a way Person B can agree with**: "Well, I don't want that to happen either!" That doesn't always happen right away. They may have to work together to rephrase it, or make it more broad, until it's something that both people can agree with. We call this **Core Worry A**.
5. Then Person B identifies their **primary worry**. Again, phrase this in this way: "I don't want \_\_\_\_\_ to happen." This is **Primary Worry B**.
6. Again, both people work together to rephrase **Primary Worry B** into something they can both agree on, **Core Worry B**.
7. Now you have two **core worries**, two things you both want to avoid. Say a simple **prayer** together, perhaps like this: *Dear God, we come together today, and pray that you would prevent \_\_\_ (Core Worry A) \_\_\_ from happening, and also that you prevent \_\_\_ (Core Worry B) \_\_\_ from happening. We disagree on the details, but we both want these things, and we believe you do too. May your will be done. Amen.*

(see other side for two examples)

**Example 1. Barney is pro-life; Mildred is pro-choice.**

2. **The issue in neutral terms:** Whether abortion should be legal.
3. **Primary Worry A:** Barney says, “I don’t want babies to be killed.”
4. **Core Worry A:** Mildred says, “I don’t agree with that, because I don’t believe that embryos are babies.” So Barney rephrases it: “I don’t want innocent lives to be lost.” Mildred says, “Okay. I can agree with that!”
5. **Primary Worry B:** Then Mildred says, “I don’t want men telling women what to do with their bodies.”
6. **Core Worry B:** Barney says, “Well, I think it’s okay to stop women from committing murder!” So Mildred rephrases it: “I don’t want women to feel that they are controlled by men.” Barney says, “Okay. I can agree with that.”
7. **Prayer:** Barney and Mildred both pray together: “Dear God, we come together today, and pray that you would prevent the loss of innocent life, and also that you would prevent women from feeling controlled by men. We disagree on the details, but we both want these things, and we believe you do too. May your will be done. Amen.”

**Example 2. Eva and Max are both worked up about the migrant caravan in Mexico. Max wants to welcome them as refugees seeking asylum, while Eva wants the US to turn them back immediately.**

2. **The issue in neutral terms:** There is a caravan of migrants heading toward the US border.
3. **Primary Worry A:** Eva says, “I don’t want our country to allow those people to come here and break our laws.”
4. **Core Worry A:** Max says, “But they’re not coming to break our laws; they’re coming to seek asylum, which is perfectly legal!” Eva says, “I disagree with you. But what if we say it like this: I don’t want our country to allow anyone to come here illegally.” Max thinks about it, and says, “Well, that’s not what I think is going on with the caravan, but I do agree with your statement. Okay.”
5. **Primary Worry B:** Then Max says, “I don’t want our country to give into its worst instincts.”
6. **Core Worry B:** Eva says, “That’s hurtful, Max. I don’t think I’m one of the ‘worst instincts’ of our country.” Max says, “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean it like that. How about this: I don’t want our country to give up on its history of compassion.” Eva replies, “Alright, fine. I don’t think that’s really what’s going on here, but I can agree with your statement.”
7. **Prayer:** Eva and Max both pray together: “Dear God, we come together today, and pray that you would keep our country strong in enforcing its laws, while at the same time keep it compassionate in dealing with others. We disagree on the details, but we both want these things, and we believe you do too. May your will be done. Amen.”