

ROYCE WHITE

# COVENANT LOVE

A Christian  
Marriage Mentorship  
Manual

## MENTOR'S GUIDE

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Marriage Mentorship  
Manual

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COVENANT LOVE: A Christian Marriage Mentorship Manual: **Mentors Guide**  
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### **READ THIS OR YOU'LL MISS SOMETHING...**

If you're like a lot of people, you will skip the Preface and Introduction — don't do it. Actually you can skip the Preface, it's just someone telling why the book is good. But the Introduction has some important things distilled down for helping you understand the book better. It's short, just a couple pages. Trust me on this even though I haven't earned your trust... yet. Enjoy!

# Dedication

How can I not dedicate this book to the King of Kings? Proverbs 19:14 says, “*House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the LORD.*” I call my bride *the most beautiful and wonderful woman in the world* – because she is. There is no man on earth who is more blessed than I am with the bride that He has given me. She embodies all the qualities of an excellent and incredible wife – I only wish I had eyes to see that sooner – she would have faired much better had I been a better leader and not the selfish toad that I have been most of my life (my apologies to toads everywhere). Thanks be to Jesus for opening my eyes – even though slowly! Finally, this is for so many of my dear friends and family who have gone through the pain of infidelity, divorce, abandonment, or irreconcilable differences. My hope is that this will help a new generation get on target and stay on target until *death do us part*. I pray for you all as I write. My heart is with you, always...





# Introduction

Greetings Beloved of the Lord!

Imagine a life where love deepens with every passing season, where challenges are met not with fear but with unwavering unity, and where the bond between you and your spouse becomes a testament to the enduring, transformative power of God's grace. This isn't a distant dream, it is the profound *reality* that awaits when a marriage is *intentionally* built on the unshakeable foundation of *Covenant Love*. Here, within the pages of *Covenant Love: A Marriage Mentorship Manual*, we embark on a sacred journey together, one that promises not just survival, but a vibrant, flourishing union designed by the *Master Architect* Himself.

In every significant aspect of life, mentorship plays a vital role in our growth. Think of the athlete who seeks guidance from a seasoned coach, the student who learns from a wise professor, or the apprentice who hones their craft under the tutelage of a master. These relationships aren't about weakness, they are about recognizing that true excellence, profound understanding, and lasting success are often cultivated through the wisdom and experience of those who have walked the path before us; for wisdom isn't what you know, it's what you do with what you know. Mentorship is a beautiful expression of God's kindness (Romans 2:4), offering us a guiding hand, a listening ear, and a wealth of shared insight that can prevent unnecessary stumbles and accelerate our progress.

Nowhere is this principle more vital, more precious, than in the sacred institution of marriage. In a world that often bombards us with fleeting trends and subjective advice, it is essential to anchor our most intimate earthly relationship to timeless, divine truth. Marriage, in its purest form, is a covenant – a sacred promise made before God, intended to be an unbreakable reflection of His own unfailing love for us. Yet, the journey of *Covenant Love* is often uncharted territory, filled with both breathtaking beauty and unexpected terrain. This is where mentorship becomes not just helpful, but essential.

*Covenant Love* is born from a deep understanding of this need – a need for guidance, encouragement, and a clear roadmap grounded in God's unchanging Word. This manual is much more than just a collection of information, it is a carefully crafted discipleship tool, designed to lead you and your spouse into a deeper, richer understanding of the divine blueprint for marriage. It is an invitation to feast, to *truly* feast, on every thought and concept that can transform your relationship from one of mere coexistence to one of profound, Christ-centered unity. We have poured our hearts, prayers, and experience into these pages, driven by the desire to see your marriage not only *thrive* but become a radiant beacon of God's design.

As you turn these pages, you will discover a journey that begins with the very heart of God's intention for marriage – understanding its divine origin and purpose. We will explore how your union is meant to be a living picture of Christ's love for His Church, a testament to His faithfulness and grace. You will delve into the transformative power of biblical communication, learning to speak *truth in love* and listen with empathy, ensuring your conversations build up rather than tear down. We promise to guide you through understanding the unique personalities within your marriage, resolving conflicts with grace, and establishing healthy boundaries that protect your sacred space.

Furthermore, this manual will lead you into the profound depths of intimacy – spiritual, emotional, and physical –

and illuminate the sacred gift of self-giving that fuels it. You will learn to build unwavering trust, navigate the painful possibility of betrayal, and partner effectively in raising the next generation. We will walk with you as you face life's inevitable challenges and transitions, not as individuals battling alone, but as a united front, pressing on together. You will discover the joy of growing in faith, service, and a shared vision, becoming true stewards of your home and your resources.



There will be some redundancy within the book – some chapters can use a few of the same points to help understanding – let that be a sign to really let that point sink in. It's been proven that we need to hear things several times before they can take affect – especially if we're not actively listening...

This is not a superficial guide; it is an intricate tapestry woven with biblical wisdom and practical application. Our promise to you is that every thought, every concept, every exercise has been designed with the deepest care to draw you closer to God and to each other. We desire for you to hang on every word, not because of our own wisdom, but because these words point to the ultimate source of wisdom and love – our Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that the kindness of God, revealed through His Word and His design for marriage, will lead you into a repentance that transforms, a turning towards a love that is deeper, stronger, and more joyful than you ever imagined.

Also, remember as you're reading through this book, it is written mostly for preweds and young married couples. Wherein, it is of great value for *all* married couples, the tone is more *prescriptive* than *restorative*, meaning that the tone is directed more toward putting into place good practices. Having said that, *everything* in here can *also* be used as *restorative* practice because they are biblical, godly concepts. So, in short, though made for teaching how to, it's also good for applying to a current problem.

*Covenant Love* is not an uber-detailed, all encompassing exposé on every facet of marriage! It is a practical guide to help you navigate the biggest potential problems within marriage and biblical methodologies, godly strategies and tactics, to press on in love with your covenant. It is also to give helpful guidance during mentorship to delight in your marriage. Scripture is full of ways we can and should do things. The more we are in tune with God's word, the easier it is to know what we should do.

Common sense is no longer common, Fortunately, we have scripture to tell us truth and challenge our selfishness, arrogance, and avoidance.

This book is ultimately about preparation and resilience within your marriage. It's designed to equip you with a deeper understanding of the realities that can surface in a lifelong covenant, not to sow fear, but to foster preparedness. By exploring the biblical foundations of covenant love and practical strategies for navigating challenges – from intimacy and communication to the profound crisis of betrayal and addiction – we aim to help you face potential difficulties with wisdom, courage, and a steadfast reliance on God. Our hope is that by understanding these things beforehand and learning how to address problems as they arise, you can build a marriage that is not only enduring but also rich in grace, trust, and a love that truly honors God.

*Covenant Love* is an invitation to embrace the most beautiful love story ever conceived – the story of two individuals, joined by God, reflecting His divine love to the world. It is a promise to equip you, to encourage you, and to walk alongside you as you build a marriage that is resilient, purposeful, and gloriously Christ-centered. Dive in, explore, and prepare to feast. Your covenant journey awaits.

Much love and blessings while straining forward, I remain your servant,

Royce White, Author  
October 2025

*P.S. – As we embark on this exploration of marriage and Covenant Love, it’s important for you to know my perspective. I approach life, and therefore this book, through the lens of a Biblical Christian worldview, which I often think of as the “Physics of God.” My belief is that this framework, rooted in the timeless truths of Christianity, offers a foundational understanding of reality that has proven its enduring strength. Just as the laws of physics govern the tangible world with predictable outcomes, I believe the principles of God’s truth provide a reliable pathway – in fact, the only pathway – toward the most fulfilling and robust outcomes in our lives and relationships. This perspective will infuse the entirety of “Covenant Love,” shaping how we discuss challenges, explore solutions, and ultimately, how we build a marriage that honors God and stands the test of time. My aim is to present these concepts in a way that resonates logically, even to the most discerning mind, demonstrating that aligning with timeless truth is the most profound investment we can make in our unions – and in everything else.*





"Think of yourself as  
a trusted companion on  
a journey, pointing out  
landmarks and offering  
insights gleaned from  
your own travels"

Mihi

# Chapter zero

## How to Be A Mentor

*“Iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.”*  
~Proverbs 27:17

### **Mentor’s Guide: Core Principles & Practices**

[This chapter is *different* in the Mentoree’s Manual – it tells them how to be a good Mentoree]

Welcome to the vital role of a mentor in guiding others through the principles of *Covenant Love*. Your willingness to invest in others is a testament to your own growth and commitment to Christ. This guide is designed to equip you, not to make you an expert in every area, but to help you *facilitate* deeper understanding and transformation in those you mentor. Remember, you are a *guide*, not a *guru*. Your own journey of faith and learning is a significant asset, but your primary role is to help the mentoree discover truths for themselves, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

### **How to Use the Guide Portion**

This guide is designed to be a practical tool for your journey as a mentor. After each core concept and subsection, you’ll find a ‘[Mentor’s Guide:]’ section. These sections offer suggestions, probing questions, and insights to help you facilitate deeper understanding and application for your mentorees. We encourage you to engage with these prompts, using them to foster open dialogue, encourage self-discovery, and build strong, God-honoring relationships. Use as little or as much as you want. Create your own thoughts (and please let us know of any suggestions you have to make this better – we are not the end all of wisdom and insight). This tool is here for when you are starting out, so those with *no experience* can grow quickly as mentors and those with years of experience can use what they want/need.

### **The Role of the Mentor: Guide and Guru**

Your primary function is to facilitate discovery, not to dictate answers. Think of yourself as a trusted companion on a journey, pointing out landmarks and offering insights gleaned from your own travels, rather than a tour guide who dictates every step. This means your conversations will be more about asking questions and listening than delivering lectures. Be humble and authentic; sharing your own growth journey, including where you’ve stumbled and learned, can be incredibly powerful. It normalizes struggle and shows that growth is an ongoing process. Crucially, strive to create a safe space for *vulnerability*. This means being a confidential *active* listener, non-judgmental, and respecting

the personal stories shared with you. Maintain *ethical boundaries* by recognizing that your role is distinct from that of a licensed therapist or counselor. If you encounter situations requiring professional mental health support, be prepared to guide the mentoree toward appropriate resources (your church, local mental health, etc.).



### **Essential Coaching Skills for Mentorship**

To effectively guide your mentorees, developing certain foundational coaching skills is key. Begin by building *rapport* – establishing trust, connection, and a comfortable dynamic from the very first interaction. This involves being present, showing genuine interest, being curious, and creating an atmosphere where the mentoree feels safe to open up. Practice *active listening*, mirroring, and reflection: truly hear what is being said, both verbally and non-verbally, and reflect it back (“So, if I’m hearing you correctly, you’re feeling...”). This confirms understanding and shows you are deeply engaged. A powerful tool is “bottom lining” and clarification. When a mentoree is exploring a complex issue, use phrases like, “So, what I’m hearing you say is...” This helps distill their message, ensures accuracy, and keeps the session moving in the right direction without getting bogged down. Don’t be afraid to ask for specificity and immediacy (WHAT EXACTLY needs to be done and WHEN EXACTLY does it need to be done. Prompt them to articulate precise details and current feelings (“When did that happen?”, “What exactly did you feel in that moment?”). This grounds their reflections in concrete experiences. Cultivate powerful questioning by using open-ended questions that encourage deeper thought and self-discovery (“What does that mean to you?”, “What options do you see?”). Finally, practice summarizing and paraphrasing to consolidate key points, reinforcing understanding and tracking progress throughout your conversations.

### **Understanding the Mentoree’s Journey**

Everyone you mentor is on their own *unique path* of growth and self-awareness. Recognize that they are at a different stage than you or others, and approach them with patience and empathy. Some may be young Christians, having only just started following Jesus this year (or last week!). Others may be seasoned and studied followers of Christ. Some may not know Jesus at all.

Active listening extends beyond just the words; pay attention to underlying emotions, unspoken concerns, and their overall demeanor. *Read between the lines* and then bottom line to see if you enabled discovery. Understand that personal and relational growth can be slow and challenging, so *avoid rushing* the process. Be particularly mindful of differing capacities for self-disclosure. Some individuals are naturally more open (Outgoing Personality), while others may need encouragement and time to build trust (for instance, People-Oriented individuals need to love you before they trust you and Task-Oriented individuals need to trust you before the love you!). Encourage vulnerability, but *never* pressure someone beyond their comfort zone – at least not too far beyond their comfort zone! Stretching is important and good in order to learn and grow (called *The Law of The Rubber Band*). Recognize cues that someone might be feeling *overexposed* or *shutting down*, and *adjust* your approach accordingly. Your goal is to *walk alongside* them, supporting their individual pace and process.

In the realm of coaching and mentoring, “being curious” is not just a nicety; it’s a *foundational* posture. It means approaching the mentoree’s world with genuine wonder and an open mind, free from preconceived notions or the urge to jump to conclusions – even if what they are saying is way off base. It will allow you to find out what is truly going on in their heart and mind. This curiosity fuels powerful questions, encourages active listening, and creates an environment where the mentoree feels truly seen and understood. When you are genuinely curious, you’re not just trying to gather information; you’re seeking to understand the mentoree’s unique perspective, their internal landscape, and the meaning they ascribe to their experiences, which is essential for their own self-discovery.

## Facilitating Deeper Understanding

Your role in helping mentorees grasp the concepts within *Covenant Love* involves more than just reading the text. Ask *insightful* questions that prompt reflection on the material. For example, after discussing a particular concept, ask, “What resonates most with you from that section?” or “How does this idea connect with your own experiences?” Encourage them to clarify concepts in their own words. This process fosters ownership and deeper comprehension. You can ask them to explain a principle as if they were explaining it to a friend. Utilize analogies and stories – both those provided in the book and by encouraging them to discover their own – to illustrate points and make them more relatable and memorable. The *goal* is to help them *internalize the lessons*, not just memorize them. There are a set of questions at the end of each Chapter so this will help facilitate questions throughout (if you prepare). But don’t rely solely on those. Be present in the moment and be wonderfully curious! Your curiosity will drive you to ask deeper, better questions, which in turn will drive the mentoree to give deeper, better answers, which will drive you to ask even deeper, better questions, which in turn will drive the mentoree to give deeper, better answers... you get the picture.

## Navigating Crucial Conversations

Crucial conversations are inevitable when exploring deep relational and spiritual topics. These are discussions involving high stakes, differing opinions, and strong emotions. Your ability to navigate them skillfully is key. First, focus on establishing and keeping the conversation safe. This means creating an environment of trust where both you and the mentoree feel respected and heard, making it safe to share difficult truths or feelings without fear of judgment or reprisal. Listen not only to the “WHAT” of the conversation (the Context: the information, facts, events, and specific issues being discussed) but also for the “HOW” (the Condition: the attitude, emotion, and tone of the conversation). Both are critical clues. Create a foundation for these discussions by establishing “Mutual Purpose” (ensuring you both share a common goal for the conversation) and “Mutual Respect” (acknowledging and valuing each other’s worth). When discussing difficult topics, state facts clearly and separate them from your assumptions, judgments, or interpretations. Have everyone (including you!) use “I-statements” to express your own perspective respectfully (“I noticed...”, “I felt...”). Always *invite* the other person’s perspective and *truly* listen to it. Work towards shared understanding and agreement, acknowledging that differences may still exist, but that you have navigated them respectfully. (*Crucial Conversations*, a book by Joseph Grenny, et. al., is mandatory reading for everyone in the world – at least according to me. There is no better resource (except the Bible) to gain wisdom in navigating hard topics in conversations. Read it soon to be a better mentor. Then, recommend it to your Mentorees after finishing *Covenant Love*.)

## Encouraging Application and Practice

The true value of mentorship lies in helping mentorees translate understanding into action. Consistently connect the scriptural and relational concepts from the book to the mentoree’s real-life situations and their marriage. Encourage them to identify small, actionable steps or “homework” that build on the insights gained in your conversations. Discuss potential challenges they might face in applying new principles and brainstorm practical ways to overcome them together. Don’t forget to celebrate their small victories, acknowledge their progress, and affirm their courage to try new approaches. This positive reinforcement is crucial for building momentum and confidence.

## Personalization and Adaptability

Remember that each mentoree is *unique*. Recognize and adapt your mentoring style to their personality type (you can refer to the principles in Chapter 4 for guidance on different personality styles from the *DISC Model of Human Behavior* and you can also download our booklet from [WeAreCaris.com/personality-ebooklet](http://WeAreCaris.com/personality-ebooklet) ). Tailor your conversa-

tion to their immediate needs, their specific context, and their pace of learning and integration. Building a mentoring “rhythm” that feels natural and productive for both you and the mentoree is key to a sustainable and effective relationship. This might mean adjusting the length of your sessions, the frequency, or the depth of topics covered based on their current capacity and receptiveness.



### **The “Long Game” of Mentoring & Fostering Self-Awareness**

*Marriage and spiritual growth are a marathon, not a sprint.* Emphasize that transformation takes time, and there will inevitably be setbacks or periods of slow progress. Encourage persistence and help your mentorees focus on the *long-term vision* of growth rather than expecting immediate perfection. Your role is to guide them toward their *own* self-awareness and self-correction, rather than always providing the answer or the correction yourself. Help them understand the “why” behind the teachings – how these principles contribute to their overall spiritual health and the flourishing of their marriage. This fosters independence and a deeper, more internalized commitment to the principles.

### **The Power of the Spirit in Mentoring**

Ultimately, transformation comes through the work of the *Holy Spirit*. Rely on God’s wisdom, guidance, and power throughout the mentoring process. Be *diligent* in *praying* for your mentoree, before, during, and after your sessions. Encourage them to cultivate their own prayer life and dependence on God. Your goal is to foster dependence on God’s transforming work, not on your own abilities or insights. You are a vessel and a guide, but the true change agent is the *Spirit of God*.

### **Understanding Professional Roles & Ethical Boundaries**

It is crucial to understand the distinct roles and limitations within relational guidance. Coaching typically focuses on future-oriented goal achievement, helping individuals maximize their performance and potential. Mentoring involves sharing wisdom, experience, and guidance based on one’s own journey and biblical principles. Counseling often addresses emotional and behavioral issues with a focus on healing past hurts and developing coping mechanisms. Therapy, requiring licensed professionals, delves into deeper psychological issues, diagnoses, and treatment plans for mental health conditions. Your role as a mentor is to guide and encourage based on biblical principles and your life experience. You are not a therapist or a psychologist, and you should not attempt to diagnose or treat mental health conditions.

Be mindful of your ethical guidelines and operate strictly within your skills and credentials. If a mentoree exhibits signs of needing professional help – such as severe depression, trauma, addiction, or if there are indications of abuse – you must recognize this boundary. Your responsibility is then to respectfully suggest they seek professional therapy or counseling. You can *positively* hold them *accountable* for seeking this help by gently checking in on their progress (without overstepping into their therapeutic relationship) and encouraging them to follow through.

Furthermore, mentors must be prepared to address situations involving illegal activities or serious ethical/immoral issues that go beyond the scope of biblical guidance (not the ability of the bible, but the scope of needed professional/legal help). In such cases, you must be ready to cease the mentoring relationship. Depending on the severity and legal requirements, you may need to consider reporting illegal activities to the appropriate authorities. Your priority is safety and ensuring the mentoree(s) receive the correct level of intervention, which may involve guiding them toward legal or specialized ethical support. Disengage from the mentorship with care, focusing on the safety and appropriate next steps for everyone involved.

\* \* \* \* \*

You've embarked on a profound journey by stepping into the role of a mentor, and the commitment you've shown in preparing yourself is commendable. The path ahead of guiding others through the truths of *Covenant Love* will undoubtedly be filled with rich discoveries, moments of breakthrough, and opportunities to witness God's transformative work firsthand. Embrace this process with open hearts and curious minds, remembering that your consistent presence, your attentive listening, and your faithful guidance are invaluable. Rise to this challenge with all the encouragement, wisdom, and grace you can muster, striving not just to be a mentor, but to be the best mentor you can possibly be for those God has placed in your care.

Remember, you can contact us at anytime to ask questions and get support from the community. There are many methods available to do that. See [WeAreCaris.com/mentors](http://WeAreCaris.com/mentors).

“Mentoring transforms lives by revealing the hidden treasures within.”

\* \* \* \* \*

*Sample Mentor's entry found through the book:*

*[Mentor's Guide: This is a sample of the call-outs you will find in the book after each section it is referring to. This will give you hints, stories, questions, etc., that you can use to guide them along. Wherever you see a shaded area, that is italicized and starting with Mentor's Guide (like this paragraph), that is additional information for you and is **not** in the Mentoree's Manual. You don't have to use it, it's just to give you some ideas on how to make a point if you need to. Some people are just starting out as mentors (most people are just starting out). It will also give you an idea of how to do this in general so you can build your ability. Feel free to write acronyms or acrostics or a word or two next to the section or in the margins to remind you of other things you think of for the next time you use it... Make it a working tool.]<sup>00001</sup>*





"Marriage is more than just a feeling; it's a covenant. And covenants require honest conversation about the realities, not just the dreams."

Mihi



## The Divine Design for Marriage

*“Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”*

*~Genesis 1:26*

Major Scripture References: Genesis 1:26-28, Genesis 2:18-25; Ephesians 5:31-33; Malachi 2:14-16; Hebrews 13:4

The engagement ring sparkled on Chloe’s finger, a dazzling symbol of the whirlwind romance that had swept her and Evan off their feet. They were the picture of young love, a vibrant splash of color against the mundane, lost in the intoxicating glow of shared laughter, stolen glances, and the dizzying promise of forever. Every moment felt like a scene from a movie, destined for a happily ever after. Evan adored Chloe’s infectious energy, her boundless optimism, and the way she made even the most mundane grocery run feel like an adventure. Chloe, in turn, was captivated by Evan’s easy charm, his adventurous spirit, and the way he seemed to see the world through the same rose-tinted glasses she did.

As the wedding date loomed, the air buzzed with excited chatter about venues, guest lists, and the perfect shade of blush for the bridesmaids’ dresses. They were so consumed by the planning, the dreaming, and the sheer exhilaration of it all, that the deeper realities of marriage seemed like distant, almost irrelevant, details. Chloe, caught up in the infatuation, brushed aside a tiny whisper of unease about Evan’s vague answers when the topic of finances arose. He had always managed to smooth things over with a charming smile and a promise to handle it, and she, blinded by love, had been happy to let him. Similarly, Evan, so smitten with Chloe’s zest for life, didn’t probe too deeply into her seemingly casual comments about “maybe having kids someday” – a statement that, in his mind, simply meant “later,” not “never.”

Their mentors, a wise couple in their fifties named Mark and Emily, watched with gentle concern. They had seen this before – the dizzying heights of infatuation that could obscure crucial foundations. During one of their premarital sessions, Mark, with a kind but firm tone, gently steered the conversation away from floral arrangements and towards the bedrock issues. “Chloe, Evan,” he began, his voice calm, “falling in love is a beautiful gift. But marriage is more

than just a feeling; it's a covenant. And covenants require honest conversation about the realities, not just the dreams.”

Emily added, “The ‘honeymoon phase’ is wonderful, but it doesn’t last forever, usually only around 18 months. What happens when the excitement fades and the everyday challenges of life set in? We need to talk about the things that matter most, the things that can make or break a marriage.”



Hesitantly at first, then with a dawning realization, Chloe and Evan began to peel back the layers of their infatuation. The conversation about finances revealed Evan’s significant student loan debt, a burden he had been hoping would somehow resolve itself. Then came the discussion about children, where Chloe’s lighthearted “someday” translated into a deeply held personal conviction that she wasn’t sure she wanted to be a mother. Evan, who had always envisioned a bustling family life, felt a knot tighten in his stomach.

It was a stark awakening. The carefully constructed fantasy of their wedding day suddenly felt fragile, threatened by the looming reality of these profound differences. But instead of letting it shatter their dreams, this difficult conversation became a turning point. They paused, truly looked at each other, and began to understand that love wasn’t just about shared excitement; it was about shared commitment, about navigating complexities together. The realization settled in that marriage was far deeper than they had imagined – a lifelong journey requiring not just devotion, but a commitment to learn, to grow, and to truly invest in God and each other, because it wouldn’t always be easy, and it certainly wouldn’t always be roses. The path ahead was clearer, harder, but ultimately, *infinitely* more hopeful...

*[Mentor’s Guide: This opening story is designed to highlight the contrast between infatuation (which can last 18 months after marriage hormonally<sup>1</sup>) and the deeper realities of marriage, and the crucial role of mentors in guiding couples toward honesty. When discussing this with your mentorees, encourage them to reflect on their own journey. You might ask: “What drew you to each other initially? Can you share a time when you had a ‘wake-up call’ or a realization about something significant in your relationship that required deeper conversation? How did it feel to have that difficult talk?” Your role here is to gently guide them to see how crucial early, honest conversations are, using the story as a relatable example of potential pitfalls that mentorship can help avoid. Be **curious** about their initial romantic stages and any subtle areas of avoidance they might have experienced.<sup>01001</sup>]*

Welcome to *Covenant Love: A Christian Marriage Mentorship Manual!* Whether you’re just starting to dream about “I do,” navigating those exciting (and sometimes wild!) early years of marriage, or you’re a seasoned couple ready to share (and receive) wisdom, this manual is for you. Think of it as a roadmap, a conversation starter, and a wellspring of encouragement, all rolled into one. Our hope is that this workbook will shine a light on the incredible beauty and lasting strength found in a marriage built on *original intent* – on enduring biblical principles. You may have totally different perspectives than our Chloe and Evan story above, but we all have potential for struggle. Considering opposites typically attract in love relationships (about 85% of the time), there’s a good chance you will wake up sooner or later next to someone you don’t understand.

So, where do we begin? Right at the source. It’s vital to remember that marriage isn’t just some good idea cooked up by humans; it’s a divine masterpiece, God’s design, and His incredible gift. Understanding this foundational truth is like laying the concrete for a skyscraper – it’s what everything else rests upon and goes way down deep! If you’re a *seasoned professional* (married a while), don’t think this is too basic – all the points are worth remembering. Plus, the chapter on *Personality* is incredibly invaluable and the questions in each of the Workbook sections are revealing and healing.

*[Mentor's Guide: This introduction sets the stage for the book's purpose and tone. As you read this with your mentorees, invite them to share their initial impressions. Ask them: "What are your hopes for this manual? What does the idea of 'mentorship' mean to you right now? How does the idea of opposites attracting resonate with your own experience, and what does that bring up for you regarding communication or understanding?" Your aim is to help them see this as a tool for proactive growth and to gauge their openness to the mentorship process itself. <sup>01002</sup>]*

## Marriage as God's Covenant Idea

At its heart, Christian marriage is all about covenant. Long before there were wedding contracts, God was making covenants with His people – deep, relational agreements marked by faithfulness, commitment, and a yearning for connection. Think about God's promises to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), or the profound new covenant established through Jesus (Luke 22:20). These covenants reveal God's character: steadfast loyalty, boundless love, and an unbreakable commitment to relationship. Isn't that where you want to begin?

Marriage is meant to *mirror* this *divine covenant*. It's far more than a transaction where you exchange vows based on what you get. Instead, it's a *sacred promise*, a deeply personal oath made before God and your community to love, honor, and cherish each other through thick and thin (it's taken me a lifetime to determine what *cherish* means!). This *covenant* perspective gives marriage a resilience and depth that can weather any storm, reminding us that our commitment is rooted in something far greater than our fleeting feelings. It calls us to a love that's steadfast, enduring, and truly reflects the faithfulness of God Himself.

*[Mentor's Guide: This section introduces the crucial concept of covenant. Help your mentorees grasp the weight and meaning of this. Ask: "When you hear the word 'covenant,' what comes to mind? How does it feel different from a 'contract'? Can you think of a time you've seen or experienced God's covenant faithfulness? How might understanding marriage as a covenant change how you approach disagreements or difficult times?" You can also share a brief, personal anecdote about your own understanding or experience of covenant love in marriage to make it more tangible. Emphasize that covenant is active, not passive. <sup>01003</sup>]*

## Straight from the Garden: God's Original Marriage Blueprint (Genesis 1-2)

The very beginning of the Bible gives us the original blueprint for marriage. In Genesis 1:26-28, we learn that God created us male and female in His own image. This means we both carry a piece of God's likeness, and that we are uniquely designed to complement each other. We are made with God's stuff. To be sure, we are *not* God, but we're supposed to resemble our Father!

Then, in Genesis 2:18-25, God says something *incredibly* significant: "It is *not good* for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." He then forms woman from man's very being, his very flesh. This beautiful, poetic account highlights some crucial purposes for marriage:

*Companionship:* God saw that being alone wasn't the best for us. Marriage offers a unique, intimate companionship you won't find anywhere else. It's about having your 'person,' your ultimate teammate.

*Mutual Help and Complementarity:* The "helper suitable" (in Hebrew, *ēzer kenegdo* – עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ) isn't just someone to assist; it's a counterpart, a complement. Men and women bring different, yet equally valuable, strengths and perspectives. Together, you're meant to support *each other*, fill in each other's gaps, and function as a stronger, more

complete unit.

*Procreation:* God’s first command to Adam and Eve was, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Genesis 1:28). Marriage is the intended context for building a family and continuing God’s creation.



*Unity:* The declaration, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and cling to his wife, and they shall become *one flesh*” (Genesis 2:24 my *emphasis*), paints a picture of profound, *sacred* unity. Primary loyalties shift in your life, and a new, singular entity – the married couple – is formed. This “one flesh” idea isn’t just physical; it weaves together your spiritual, emotional, and physical lives – every part of your being.

So, from the very beginning, marriage was God’s idea, designed for goodness and purpose.

*[Mentor’s Guide: This section delves into the Genesis creation accounts, the blueprint of marriage. As you discuss this, help your mentorees explore how these foundational purposes apply to them. Ask: “How does understanding that you are made in God’s image impact your view of yourself and your spouse? What does ‘companionship’ look like in your relationship today? How do you see your ‘complementarity’ working (or not working) in your marriage? How do the concepts of procreation and ‘one flesh’ resonate with your hopes or current realities?” Encourage them to share specific examples of when they’ve felt like a “team” or when their differences have worked to their advantage.]<sup>01004</sup>*

## **Marriage as a Love Story: A Picture of Christ and the Church** (Ephesians 5)

The Apostle Paul really takes our understanding of marriage to a deeper level in Ephesians 5:31-33. He connects the Genesis idea of becoming “one flesh” to something even grander: the relationship between Jesus Christ and His Church. He says, “This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.”

This means that when marriage works the way God designed it, it’s meant to be a living, breathing picture of the incredible relationship between Christ and His people! How does it do this?

*Sacrificial Love:* Christ gave Himself for the Church (not only in life but through His death). Likewise, husbands are called to love their wives in a sacrificial way, putting their wives’ well-being above their own. It’s not about being the boss, but about embodying Christ’s *servant leadership*.

*Devotion and Transformation:* Christ’s love cleanses and transforms the Church. A husband’s love should aim to help his wife grow in her walk with God, sanctifying her – setting her apart for God’s purpose.

*Respect and Partnership:* Wives are called to respect and submit to their husbands “as to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:22). This isn’t about being a doormat, but about a willing, honoring response to *godly leadership*, reflecting the Church’s devotion to Christ. For husbands, this means loving their wives as their own bodies – nourishing and cherishing them, just as Christ does the Church.

*A Gospel Reflection:* When a marriage *truly* reflects Christ’s love and the Church’s response, it becomes a powerful, visible testimony to the Gospel itself – God’s immense love, His unwavering faithfulness, and the transformative power of His grace. It speaks volumes to the world about God’s redemptive plan. Isn’t that why we’re here?

*[Mentor's Guide: This section introduces the profound theological link between marriage and the Christ-Church relationship. This can be a complex concept, so approach it with sensitivity and curiosity. Ask: "What are your initial reactions to marriage being a picture of Christ and the Church? How does the idea of 'sacrificial love' resonate with you personally? For husbands: What does 'servant leadership' look like in practice in your marriage? For wives: What does 'respectful response to godly leadership' mean to you? How can your marriage, imperfect as it is, be a testimony of the Gospel?" You might share a brief, personal example of how you've seen this Christ-like love play out in a marriage, or even in your own, to illustrate the concept.]*<sup>01005</sup>

## **The Purpose of Marriage: A Symphony of Glorifying God and Living in Love**

When we put all these pieces together, the purpose of marriage shines brightly:

*To Glorify God:* First and foremost, our marriages are meant to point to our Creator. When couples live in covenant faithfulness, reflect Christ's love, and navigate life with His grace, their union becomes a witness to His amazing power and goodness.

*Companionship:* As Genesis showed us, marriage is designed for deep partnership and intimacy, a constant companion through life's journey.

*Procreation:* This includes both the biological continuation of the human family and the spiritual continuation of God's people through discipleship within the home.

*Mutual Support:* Spouses are called to be *each other's* biggest cheerleaders, bearing burdens together, celebrating joys, and spurring each other on in their faith.

*A Picture of the Gospel:* As we've seen, marriage is intended to be a living, breathing illustration of Christ's profound love for His Church.

*[Mentor's Guide: This section synthesizes the purposes of marriage. Help your mentorees process these purposes and how they are living them out. Ask: "Which of these purposes resonates most strongly with your marriage right now? How does your marriage currently aim to glorify God? In what ways are you experiencing deep companionship? How do you envision or practice procreation (biological or spiritual)? How can you be better cheerleaders for each other? How might your marriage serve as a tangible picture of the Gospel to others?" Encourage them to identify one or two areas they feel called to focus on or develop further.]*<sup>01006</sup>

## **The Essential Ingredient: Grace**

Let's be real for a moment. No marriage will ever perfectly hit every single mark without a crucial ingredient: God's grace. We are all human, and that means we're prone to selfishness, misunderstandings, and plain old mistakes. Not to mention sin. Grace – God's free, unmerited favor and His empowering presence – isn't just a *nice-to-have* in marriage; it's the essential oxygen it needs to survive and truly thrive.



Grace allows us to:

*Forgive Freely:* To let go of offenses and extend forgiveness to our spouse, just as Christ has forgiven us (Colos-

sians 3:13). It's a hard but necessary discipline. How many times has Christ forgiven you?

*Be Patient:* To bear with our spouse's quirks and imperfections, understanding that they, like us, are on a journey.

*Love Actively:* To choose actions that benefit our spouse, even when our feelings aren't perfectly aligned. It's love as a verb, not just a feeling.

*Receive Love:* To accept our spouse's love and forgiveness, recognizing our own desperate need for it.

Without grace, the inevitable bumps and bruises of human relationships would quickly fracture a marriage. But with grace, even the toughest times can become opportunities for deeper connection and growth.



*[Mentor's Guide: This section highlights the indispensable role of grace. This is a great opportunity to connect with your mentorees on a personal level. Ask: "When have you most needed God's grace in your marriage (or in life)? How has extending grace to your spouse (or receiving it from them) made a difference? What does 'loving actively' look like in practical terms for you, beyond just feelings? How can you intentionally cultivate more grace in your marriage daily?" Share a personal story about a time grace was vital in your own marriage, or when you saw it powerfully at work in another couple. Remind them that grace is not a permission slip for sin, but the power to overcome it.]*<sup>01007</sup>

## Marriage as a Sacred Covenant Oath

We've talked about marriage as a covenant, and it's worth emphasizing that this covenant is *sealed* by an oath – often declared publicly during a wedding ceremony. This isn't just tradition, it's a solemn promise made before God. Malachi 2:14-16 speaks about covenant-breaking in marriage with serious weight, reminding us of its *sacred* nature. And Hebrews 13:4 calls us to "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous."

This covenant oath means:

*Lifelong Commitment:* The vows you exchange are intended for life. It's a commitment to stick together through... *everything*.

*Exclusive Fidelity:* The promise of being 'one' – emotionally and physically – is the *heart* of the marital covenant.

*God as Witness:* God isn't just present; He's the ultimate witness and, in a sense, the *guarantor* of your covenant vows.

Understanding this covenant framework is the first step in building a marriage that's not only strong and faithful but also deeply pleasing to God.

*[Mentor's Guide: This section reinforces the sacredness of the marital oath. Help your mentorees internalize the seriousness and beauty of their vows. Ask: "What was your understanding of your wedding vows when you made them? How has your understanding of 'lifelong commitment' evolved? What does 'exclusive fidelity' mean to you practically, and how do you actively protect it in your marriage? How does the knowledge that God is your witness affect how you approach your commitments, especially during difficult seasons?" Encourage them to reflect on the specific wording of their vows, if applicable, and what each phrase signifies now.]*<sup>01008</sup>

## Introducing Marriage Mentorship: A Lifelong Journey of Mutual Growth

While this workbook offers a wealth of biblical wisdom and practical tools, the journey of marriage is best navigated *with a guide*. We believe that true growth and resilience are often fostered through intentional mentorship.

*The Vision:* Imagine a journey of marriage, ideally beginning even before the wedding bells ring. This journey is not meant to be walked alone. Marriage mentorship offers a seasoned guide, or mentor – an older, wiser couple, typically 20 years or more into their own covenant walk, who can walk alongside a newly engaged or newly married couple or a couple that is younger than they are! This isn't about rescuing a sinking ship – although that is a possibility – but about *equipping* adventurers before they even set sail, or offering experienced navigation as they encounter the open seas. As the author of this workbook, my vision is for couples to *pro-actively* build strong foundations rather than *re-actively* address crises.

*The Model:* This mentorship typically involves monthly meetings between the two couples (initially six months of premarital and then monthly for the first year after marriage). A key element is the intentionality of breaking into separate conversations within the mentorship context – the men speaking together alone and the women speaking together alone. In these smaller settings, the mentor couple asks probing, honest questions: “How is it going, *really*? Is there anything you're doing that you feel you shouldn't be, or something you're not doing that you should be? How are you seeing your relationship succeed, and where are the areas of struggle? What needs to change for your relationship to grow stronger in Christ? What are your ‘deal-breakers’ in marriage, and which ones are still in play for discussion or re-evaluation?” This provides a safe space for open dialogue about successes and struggles. It's an opportunity for mentors to share relatable experiences, perhaps a time when Dave almost forgot Emily's birthday for the third time, or when Sarah learned the hard way that interrupting Michael mid-sentence never ended well. Sharing these “real life” moments makes the wisdom accessible and the journey feel less daunting.

*The Process:* After the individual discussions, all four come back together. Issues that surfaced are discussed openly, and the mentor couple offers biblical wisdom, practical experience, and gentle guidance. Often, “homework” is assigned – specific actions or discussions for the younger couple to undertake before the next meeting. This might involve practicing a new communication technique, praying about a specific financial concern, or simply scheduling dedicated time together. This structured approach ensures consistent progress and active engagement.

*The Goal:* The aim is to equip the engaged, newly married, or even older couple with invaluable insights from those who have navigated the waters of marriage for decades. This proactive approach helps address potential problems before they become overwhelming, fostering growth and preventing relational damage. Think of it as preventative maintenance for the most important relationship in their lives. As one wise counselor put it, “The greatest marriages are not those without conflict, but those with the skills and commitment to navigate conflict constructively.” The goal is to learn to deal with problems and then to put in action methodologies to solve them in a day – not wait a week, month, year, decade, or life long, so you can move on from an issue before it becomes a habit, building a vaccination against future problems so situations are handled and communication becomes a natural function.

*Ongoing Support:* This mentorship isn't just for the engagement period. It's recommended to continue quarterly after the first year of monthly meetings, ensuring that significant issues are addressed promptly, preventing them from festering and becoming insurmountable. Couples can also establish their own regular meeting rhythm to continue these essential conversations. This system of ideas, concepts, and questions develops a powerful, proactive approach to strengthening marriages, mirroring the principles of leadership development but applied within the intimate context of marriage. It's about building a culture of ongoing support and learning, fostering resilience one conversation at a time.



*[Mentor's Guide: This extensive section details the mentorship model. Your role here is to build trust and excitement for the process. For the mentorees, ask: "What are your initial thoughts on this mentorship model? What excites you most, and what makes you feel apprehensive? How does the idea of separate discussions (the men and women separately meeting) within the mentorship feel to you, and why do you think it's important? What are your 'deal-breakers' or areas you're eager to discuss openly?" For the mentor-mentoree relationship, affirm: "As your mentor, my goal is to walk alongside you, offering experience and biblical wisdom. We'll create a safe space for honest conversations, and I'll share from my own journey to make this relatable. We'll aim to address challenges proactively. What are you most looking forward to discussing in our sessions?" Emphasize the proactive nature of this mentorship.]*<sup>01009</sup>



## Chapter Summary

Marriage is God's idea, rooted in His covenant nature and His redemptive plan for humanity. It's meant to reflect His relationship with us and serve specific purposes, grounded in a sacred oath. Crucially, this journey is best undertaken with the support and wisdom of experienced mentors, forming a lifelong commitment to mutual growth and proactive problem-solving.

- God created humanity (male and female) in His image, declaring it "very good."
- God established the marital union as a foundational element of human society, instituting the "one flesh" principle.
- The creation of Eve from Adam's rib is presented not as a deficiency but as a demonstration of unity, complementarity, and mutual interdependence.
- The concept of "ēzer kenegdo" (helper suitable/corresponding to him) highlights the distinct yet complementary nature of male and female in marriage.
- Marriage is presented as a divinely ordained covenant, reflecting God's own covenantal faithfulness and love.
- The initial state of aloneness for Adam, before Eve's creation, points to the inherent human need for deep, relational connection and partnership.
- The creation narrative sets the stage for understanding human identity, purpose, and the sacredness of marital commitment within God's overarching plan.

*[Mentor's Guide: Recap and Reinforcement. Briefly recap the core principles covered in the chapter. Ask your mentorees to identify one key takeaway they will carry forward. Affirm their engagement and commitment to the process, reminding them that this is the beginning of a rich journey. Reinforce that this chapter is foundational, and subsequent chapters will build upon these truths. These are the 5 major points of this chapter are:*

- *Marriage is a Divine Design and Gift: It originates from God, not just human agreement, and is intended for goodness and purpose.*
- *Marriage is a Covenant: This is a deep, relational agreement marked by faithfulness, commitment, and reflecting God's character, distinct from a conditional contract.*
- *God's Original Blueprint (Genesis): Marriage is designed for companionship, mutual help and complementarity, procreation, and profound unity ("one flesh").*
- *Marriage Reflects Christ and the Church: When functioning as intended, it mirrors the sacrificial love, devotion, and transformative relationship between Christ and His Church.*
- *Grace is Essential: God's unmerited favor is the crucial ingredient that allows marriage to survive, thrive, and overcome human imperfections and sin.]<sup>0010</sup>*

At the end of each chapter, there are 10 questions to pour over and answer alone and together – you can also answer them with your Mentor who will help you move toward unison in all these areas. Turn to the next page to see the list of 10 questions and begin really, really, really moving toward understanding God's purpose and your role.

Take your time on these answers both from your mind and from the gut – it will help you come to a total answer. Typically, our prefrontal cortex gives us the academic or thought/mind answer from our main brain and answering from the gut gives us our subconscious and experiential answers/feelings from our second brain – the endocrine system). They make a powerful pair in making decisions.

### ***General question to always ask yourself...***

Based on what you now have learned from this chapter, what do you *specifically* and *immediately* need to do or want to do to change for the better? Will you commit to doing it? Be specific and give a date and time when you will start to implement. Who is your Positive Accountability partner? Inform them so they can keep you on target.

(More questions on the next page.)

### **Action: Crafting Your Covenant Affirmation**

Read Appendix F: *The Vows of Covenant Love*. Carefully read through the traditional marriage vows presented there. Consider the language, the promises, and the depth of commitment they represent. Reflect on Your Understanding. Now, take some time to write your own personal "Covenant Affirmation." This isn't a legal document, but a heartfelt expression of what covenant means to you in the context of your relationship



# Workbook Questions for Deeper Growth and Homework



## 1. What does it mean to view marriage as a “covenant” rather than just a contract? How does this covenant perspective affect your commitment?

*Explanation sought: We want you to understand the depth of commitment inherent in a covenant. A contract is conditional; a covenant is an unconditional promise. How does this distinction impact your view of the vows you will make or have made? Consider how this covenant outlook might influence your response to conflict or unmet expectations.*

**[Mentor’s Guide: Deeper Dive into Covenant –**

*How to Teach This Principle: Guide them to explore the implications. Ask: “Can you describe a situation where you’ve seen a contract honored versus a covenant kept? How does the idea of an ‘unconditional promise’ feel when you think about marriage? What does ‘cherishing’ look like in a covenant context? How might thinking of your vows as a covenant change how you react when your spouse ‘fails’ to meet an expectation?”*

*Suggestions for Mentoree Couples: Discuss specific scenarios where a contract mindset might lead to different actions than a covenant mindset (e.g., in disagreements about finances, household chores, or future plans). How does this distinction impact their current or future vows?*

*Example or Story: “My husband and I used to treat finances like a contract – who paid for what. It led to scorekeeping. When we shifted to a covenant mindset, it became about managing our resources together. It transformed debt from a personal burden to a shared challenge we tackled as a team.”] 0011*

## 2. How does the creation account in Genesis (Genesis 1:26-28, Genesis 2:18-25) inform your understanding of marriage’s purpose?

*Explanation sought: Reflect on the specific details in Genesis – God’s image, companionship, complementarity, procreation, and the “one flesh” union. How do these foundational purposes shape your expectations for marriage, and how might they influence your roles within it?*

**[Mentor’s Guide: Genesis Purposes in Daily Life –**

*How to Teach This Principle: Connect biblical narrative to personal application. Ask: “Which of the purposes (companionship, complementarity, procreation, unity) feels most significant for your marriage right now? In what ways do you feel you and your spouse complement each other? How does the idea of ‘one flesh’ influence your understanding of your roles and responsibilities towards each other?”*

*Suggestions for Mentoree Couples: Discuss specific areas where their strengths and weaknesses naturally complement each other. Explore how the concept of “leaving and cleaving” applies to their current family dynamics.*

*Example or Story: “My wife is incredibly intuitive, and I’m analytical. When we make big decisions, I bring logic, and she brings the ‘gut check.’ Together, we’re more balanced than either of us would be alone. This complementarity helps us avoid both impulsive mistakes and overthinking.”] 0012*

## 3. Ephesians 5:31-33 speaks of marriage as a picture of Christ and the Church. What are some initial thoughts on what this means for your marriage?

*Explanation sought: This is a profound theological concept. What does it mean for your marriage to visibly represent the love, sacrifice, and devotion between Christ and His Church? Don’t worry about having all the answers; initial thoughts are welcome,*

and we will explore this more deeply. How might this symbolic representation influence your daily interactions?

**[Mentor's Guide: Applying the Christ-Church Model –**

*How to Teach This Principle: Approach this high-level theological question with sensitivity. Ask: “What does it mean to you for your marriage to ‘reflect’ Christ’s love? What does sacrificial love look like? For husbands: How can you embody servant leadership? For wives: How can you reflect devotion to Christ in your response to your husband’s leadership?” Share a brief, relatable example if they’re hesitant.*

*Suggestions for Mentoree Couples: Discuss how their actions and attitudes can mirror Christ’s love and the Church’s devotion. How can they intentionally cultivate these qualities in their daily interactions?*

*Example or Story: “When my husband faced a major illness, his vulnerability and trust in God mirrored Christ’s reliance on the Church. My role in caring for him reflected the Church’s devotion. It was a powerful testament to our faith and covenant.”<sup>0013</sup>*

#### **4. In what ways can your marriage serve to glorify God?**

*Explanation sought: Beyond personal happiness, how can your union be a witness to God’s character and purposes in the world? Think about how your unity, love, and faithfulness can reflect Him. Consider how even mundane aspects of your life together can become acts of worship.*

**[Mentor's Guide: Marriage as a Witness to God –**

*How to Teach This Principle: Help them bridge the gap between personal happiness and divine purpose. Ask: “What are some specific actions or attitudes in your marriage that you believe point others to God? How can your unity, especially through challenges, be a testament to His power? How can you intentionally make even everyday aspects of your marriage acts of worship?”*

*Suggestions for Mentoree Couples: Brainstorm specific, practical ways their marriage can be a witness (e.g., hospitality, community involvement, raising children in faith, supporting ministries).*

*Example or Story: “Our marriage has been a witness to God’s glory most profoundly through how we’ve navigated financial difficulties. Instead of letting it cause division, we committed to transparency and prayer, and we shared our struggles openly with trusted friends who prayed for us.”<sup>0014</sup>*

#### **5. How does the concept of “grace” apply to the challenges and joys of married life?**

*Explanation sought: Grace is God’s unmerited favor and empowering presence. How does receiving and extending grace impact how you handle imperfections, conflicts, and celebrate blessings in marriage? Think of specific instances where grace was needed or extended.*

**[Mentor's Guide: Practicing Grace Daily –**

*How to Teach This Principle: Connect grace to real marital experiences. Ask: “When have you most desperately needed grace from your spouse (or from God)? How did receiving or extending grace change the dynamic? What does ‘loving actively’ look like in practical terms for you, beyond just feelings? How can you intentionally cultivate more grace in your marriage daily?”*

*Suggestions for Mentoree Couples: Discuss specific instances where grace was needed or extended. Brainstorm ways to practice grace in their daily interactions, especially during conflict or when facing each other’s imperfections.*

*Example or Story: “I remember when I was exhausted and accidentally snapped at my husband. He met me with grace and pa-*

tiency, saying, 'I can see you're tired. Let me help.' That diffused the tension and allowed us to connect rather than conflict." <sup>0015</sup>

## 6. What are the key differences between viewing marriage as a covenant and viewing it as a societal contract?



*Explanation sought: This revisits the covenant concept. Elaborate on the practical differences in commitment, expectations, and dissolution if marriage is seen as a covenant versus a contract. How might this affect your approach to disagreements?*

**[Mentor's Guide: Covenant vs. Contract A Deeper Look –**

*How to Teach This Principle: Ask: "If marriage is a contract, what happens when one party doesn't uphold their end? If it's a covenant, how does that change your approach to dissatisfaction or conflict? How does the 'lifelong' aspect of a covenant impact decisions made during challenging seasons?"*

*Suggestions for Mentoree Couples: Discuss specific scenarios where a contract mindset might lead to different actions than a covenant mindset (e.g., in disagreements about finances, household chores, or future plans). How does this distinction impact their current or future vows?*

*Example or Story: "We used to treat finances like a contract – who paid for what. It led to scorekeeping. When we shifted to a covenant mindset, it became about managing our resources together. It transformed debt from a personal burden to a shared challenge we tackled as a team." <sup>0016</sup>*

## 7. What are some practical ways you can intentionally build a marriage that reflects God's glory?

*Explanation sought: Move from understanding to action. What concrete steps can you take, individually and together, to make your marriage a more visible reflection of God's presence and character? Consider small, daily actions as well as larger intentional efforts.*

**[Mentor's Guide: Intentional Steps for God's Glory –**

*How to Teach This Principle: This is about actionable steps. Ask: "What are one or two specific, small actions you can commit to this week that would intentionally reflect God's glory through your marriage? How can you hold each other accountable for these actions?"*

*Suggestions for Mentoree Couples: Encourage them to be very specific and immediate with their commitments. Help them identify how they will support each other in these intentional efforts.*

*Example or Story: "Our marriage has been a witness to God's glory most profoundly through how we've navigated financial difficulties. Instead of letting it cause division, we committed to transparency and prayer, and we shared our struggles openly with trusted friends who prayed for us." <sup>0017</sup>*

## 8. How can your marriage contribute to the "pro-creation" (both biological and spiritual) purpose God has for His people?

*Explanation sought: Consider both the physical aspect of raising children and the spiritual aspect of raising them in faith, or contributing to the spiritual growth of others through your union. How can your marriage be a "launchpad" for God's kingdom work?*

**[Mentor's Guide: Procreation Beyond Biology –**

*How to Teach This Principle: Explore both aspects of procreation. Ask: "If you have or plan to have children, how can your marriage model spiritual growth and faith for them? If children aren't in the picture, how can your marriage be a launchpad for spiritual growth in others (e.g., through hospitality, discipling others, serving in ministry)?"*

*Suggestions for Mentoree Couples: Discuss their individual and shared vision for spiritual legacy, whether through children or other forms of ministry and influence.*

*Example or Story: “For us, since we don’t have children, our marriage has been a ‘launchpad’ for discipling younger couples. We open our home, share our experiences, and intentionally invest in their growth. Our unity and shared commitment to Christ become a visible example for them.”<sup>0018</sup>*

## **9. What does it mean to find “complementary help” in your spouse, as described in Genesis 2?**

*Explanation sought: Reflect on how you and your spouse uniquely complement each other. How do your differences (when aligned with God’s purposes) strengthen your partnership? Think of specific areas where you “fill in the gaps” for each other.*

*[Mentor’s Guide: Leveraging Complementarity –*

*How to Teach This Principle: Focus on the practicalities of complementarity. Ask: “In what specific areas do you feel you and your spouse complement each other well? How do your differences strengthen your partnership? Can you share an example of a time when your spouse’s unique strengths helped you overcome a challenge? How can you intentionally leverage your complementarity in the coming week?”*

*Suggestions for Mentoree Couples: Identify specific areas where they feel their partner’s strengths compensate for their own weaknesses, and vice-versa. Discuss how to intentionally appreciate and utilize these differences.*

*Example or Story: “He’s the detail master; I’m the big-picture visionary. His planning and my creative detours made our recent trip a perfectly structured, yet wonderfully adventurous, success.”<sup>0019</sup>*

## **10. What are your initial thoughts on the concept of marriage mentorship, and how might seeking guidance from a more experienced couple benefit your journey?**

*Explanation sought: This question invites reflection on the mentorship model introduced in the teaching section. What are your personal thoughts, hopes, or concerns about being mentored or perhaps one day being mentors? How do you envision this impacting your marriage?*

*[Mentor’s Guide: Reflecting on the Mentorship Itself –*

*How to Teach This Principle: Facilitate this metacognitive reflection. Ask: “Now that you’ve heard about the mentorship model, what stands out most? What are you hopeful for in this process? Do you have any questions or concerns? How do you see this mentorship impacting your marriage moving forward? What are you eager to discuss in our upcoming sessions?” Affirm their engagement and curiosity.*

*Suggestions for Mentoree Couples: Encourage them to think about their ideal mentor relationship and what they hope to gain from the guidance.*

*Example or Story: “When we first started this journey, we were hesitant about opening up. But our mentors created such a safe and authentic space. They shared their own struggles and triumphs, making us feel understood and hopeful. Their guidance helped us navigate challenges proactively.”<sup>0020</sup>*

## **11. Pray together: Ask God to help you understand and live out His design for your marriage.**