

The Top Ten Topics for Exploring with Mentorees:

1. *The purpose of marriage.* Marriage is a means of honoring God. For Christians, the point of marriage is not living with someone you love or raising children. It is honoring God with a relationship that reflects his love, his selflessness, his grace and peace. Couples who do not grasp this invariably measure their marriages by some kind of "happiness" standard rather than a godly standard.
2. *Prevention rather than remediation* (healthy marriage habits). A little preventive care goes a long way. Developing healthy marriage habits, loving rituals, date nights, etc. will keep marriage vibrant and prevent the kind of relational rot that so often eats away at marriages.
3. *Leaving and cleaving* (putting each other first). There are many things that can compete with our commitment to each other: parents and in-laws, jobs, hobbies, friendships. The principle of putting each other first, of putting our commitment to the marriage before other, prior commitments is critical for forming a basis for marriage.
4. *The money trap.* Sound strategies for saving and spending, budgeting and giving are an important investment in a marital relationship. Money causes more problems and more arguments than just about any other issue in marriage. Getting money right, deciding on a plan that both spouses agree on, is important.
5. *Communication.* Learning to listen (and hear), talk (and connect), share in ways that go beyond mere content, be sensitive to unspoken messages, read body language and mood—good communication is a challenging and necessary skill in a marriage.
6. *Handling conflict.* The single greatest determiner of marital satisfaction is how a couple conflicts. Couples that fight well—in ways that enhance intimacy—can overcome grave problems. Couples that fight poorly—in ways that distance and estrange—will stumble over the smallest of problems.
7. *Seasons of marriage.* Every marriage has its seasons, its ebb and flow. There are seasons of joy and harvest and plenty ... and seasons of loneliness, draught, and famine. Knowing to expect changes of season and weather less pleasant seasons can equip spouses for a marriage that outlasts all seasons.

8. *Sex, Purity, and Faithfulness.* Exploring the power, pleasure, and intimacy-creating purpose of the sexual relationship ... the importance of protecting the "marriage bed" ... the different temptations of men and women ... the plague of pornography ... the importance of "affair proofing" a marriage ... the possibility of healing if unfaithfulness occurs.
9. *Intimacy is the goal.* Encouragement not to settle for something less than great. Learning to deepen, strengthen, broaden the ties of marriage. What does it mean for two to become one? How does this mimic (and prepare us for) an intimate relationship with God?
10. *Celebration and Gratitude*