



Marriage Mentoring

*Dr. Chris Grace
with Dr. Tim Muehlhoff and Alisa Grace*

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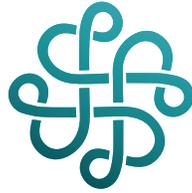
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Biola University
**CENTER *for* MARRIAGE
 & RELATIONSHIPS**

The Biola University Center for Marriage and Relationships (CMR) seeks to bring a biblical perspective to marriage and relationships, equipping individuals, couples and families with tools, resources and wisdom to help them flourish in the way in which God created them.

Our mission is to build and sustain healthy relationships and marriages in the church and the broader culture by combining the timeless, cross-cultural wisdom of Scripture with scholarly research, insights and tools.

We aspire to be a trusted resource for timely and relevant relational tools and insights, equipping marriages and relationships that model Christ's love for the church, and impact the broader culture to view relationships and marriages from a biblical, Christian perspective.

The CMR offers relational insights found in the wisdom of Scripture, with relevant and timely perspectives on healthy relationships and marriages from scholarly and applied research findings. We provide an important resource of popular-level and scholarly based relational tools and resources, leading to deeper connections with others through the transformative power of God. We focus upon various integrative topics, such as a robust theology

of marriage and a spirituality of marriage. Our website features videos, interviews, blog articles, podcasts authored by leading practitioners and scholars at Biola University.

The center hosts public lectures, events and relationship conferences each year focusing on engaged, seriously dating and married couples at churches, conference centers and universities, plus yearly training and certification opportunities in marriage mentoring, premarital education and marital counseling resources, helping to foster Christian perspectives on healthy relationships and marriages.

We are convinced that if you make key investments, your marriages and relationships can flourish in the way God intended. Working at these relationships will take discipline, grace and intentionality. But the result is worth it—you will gain an increasing love for our relational God and an increasing love for one another.

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WELCOME TO MARRIAGE MENTORING

Congratulations on putting forth the time and effort to grow your marriage and be involved with marriage mentoring! The time you invest is a worthwhile endeavor. While growing more intimate marriages takes work, the outcome of being more strongly connected as a couple is profound. Healthy, happy, Christ-centered marriages have an impact on those near us, including on our immediate culture, and ultimately on the kingdom of Christ.

Marriage is worthy of our greatest hopes and our greatest attention precisely because it is one of God's greatest gifts.

Dr. Chris Grace, Alisa Grace and Dr. Tim Muehlhoff of the Biola University Center for Marriage and Relationships are hopeful that this material will bring you closer together as a couple and closer to God—our wonderful redeemer and Savior. We have been praying for all the couples that use this material, and we want to encourage you on this journey.

May this time that you are dedicating to your marriage be blessed, and may it have an eternal impact on God's kingdom.

Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31



**Christopher
Grace,**
Director

Christopher Grace serves as the director of the Biola University Center for Marriage and Relationships and as a professor at Rosemead School of Psychology. Dr. Grace earned his M.S. and Ph.D. in experimental social psychology from Colorado State University. Since 1988, he has taught psychology and served in many administrative leadership roles at Biola. Dr. Grace and his wife, Alisa, frequently speak at conferences, churches and universities on marriage and relationships. With professional training and practical experience from nearly 30 years of marriage, they have counseled thousands of couples, sharing foundational and practical insights on enhancing intimacy.



**Tim
Muehlhoff,**
Author/
Speaker

Tim Muehlhoff is a professor of communication at Biola University, where he teaches classes in family communication, interpersonal communication, gender and conflict resolution. He completed a Ph.D. in communication theory at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where his dissertation focused on helping couples move past marital gridlock — difficult issues in marriage that won't go away despite time and effort. Dr. Muehlhoff has authored several books, including *I Beg to Differ* and *Marriage Forecasting*. For nearly 20 years, Dr. Muehlhoff and his wife, Noreen, have been frequent speakers at FamilyLife marriage conferences.



Alisa Grace,
Consulting
Director

Alisa Grace serves as a consultant to the Biola University Center for Marriage and Relationships and also co-teaches a course on Christian perspectives on marriage and relationships. She earned a degree in communications from Biola University, and previously served as director of women's ministries at Redemption Hill Church - Whittier Hills, director of public relations at Far East Broadcasting Co., and director of internal communications and events at Biola University. While she speaks regularly on topics such as dating, marriage and love, she also loves to mentor younger women and newly married couples, and provide premarital counseling.

HOW TO USE YOUR WORKBOOK

Before you get started (mentors only):

1. Review the entire workbook so you are familiar with its contents/layout.
2. Read and sign the *Marriage Mentor Covenant*. Turn in to your leadership.
3. Read *The Heart of a Mentor: Asking Great Questions* to help you know how to stimulate and lead a good conversation with your couple.
4. Read through all the material in the Appendix.

The opening pages include:

- A welcome and biography of the authors
- The Biblical purpose of marriage
- An explanation of what marriage mentoring is and what it is not
- Characteristics of an ideal mentor
- A guide for using your workbook

Each chapter contains the following:

- *Purpose*: Describes the practical outcome you can expect from the particular chapter.
- *Key Idea*: Teaches the main idea/concept you are to learn, practice and implement.
- *Homework assignment*: Assessments, discussion questions, application questions, and couple activities to be completed at home prior to the next meeting, all designed to reinforce the Key Idea.
- *Assessments/Scales/Questionnaires*: Scientifically designed tools that have undergone rigorous peer review by the scientific community to ensure good methodology to measure desired data.

Important notes regarding the assessments/scales/questionnaires:

1. *The Relationship Dynamics Scale*, pg 10, and the *Marital Quality Scale*, pg 11, contain instructions for the couple to complete the scale individually and to NOT share their answers item by item with each other. However, couples may share the overall zones or ranges their score lands in. This is because the questions in these particular assessments encourage realistic, frank reflection that can sometimes be vulnerable in the early stages of mentoring. We strongly encourage

couples to observe this restriction and to avoid asking each other to reveal their private answers when indicated otherwise.

2. The *Gratitude Questionnaire*, pg 30, contains “reverse scoring” on questions #3 and #6. That means if you circled a “7,” give yourself 1 point. If you circled a “6,” give yourself 2 points. Make sure you understand this scoring process. All *other* assessment tools and discussion questions in the workbook are to be shared.

Appendix:

- Marriage Mentor Covenant (mentors only) – for those in an established marriage mentoring program
- The Heart of a Mentor: Asking Great Questions – a list of leading questions to help stimulate the conversation
- *The Cycles and Signs of Abuse* - describes the cyclical patterns of domestic abuse, warning signs to look for, and resources to help victims of abuse.
- *When and How to Refer to a Professional* - provides telltale signs to help you recognize when to make a referral to a professional, as well as a guide to help you do it.

Prior to each meeting:

1. Both the mentors and the couples should carefully read through the assigned chapter and complete all the assessments, discussion questions, application questions and couple activities included for the next meeting.

We strongly recommend the mentors complete all the assigned work so that they are thoroughly familiar with all the content in the chapter, as well prepared with any leading questions that might be applicable during each session.

2. Mentors should pray for themselves and their couple. Ask for and rely on the Holy Spirit to give you ears to hear, eyes to see, words of wisdom and understanding for guidance (Is. 50:4; Col. 4:6).

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE?

When marriage is done well, couples experience the wonderful emotional and physical intimacy of oneness, along with a deeper, even more profound, spiritual connection. While each couple will experience this differently, there is little doubt that there is more to marriage than meets the eye. The very design and purpose of marriage points to it as being a great, even eternally significant, gift.

The Gift of Companionship

In the Bible we read of God's glory and His passionate love for His creation. The first couple enjoyed His fellowship, walking and talking with Him in what was no doubt the most incredible garden ever. They knew Him, and they knew each other. They were confidants and companions, blessed with affection and pleasure in each other's company. The opening sentence of their marriage vows—"bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh"—illustrates the supreme joy of being connected together as one. Analogies throughout both the Old and the New Testament tell of God's love for us as a husband's love for his wife, comparing heaven to a wedding banquet, and Christ, God's only son, to the ultimate bridegroom who was sent to die on the cross for his bride, the church.

The Gift of Passion

One of the greatest songs ever—the Bible's Song of Songs—was composed by Solomon, the wisest man who ever existed. In it he extols the supreme bliss of an intimate oneness, describing a love and attraction that is both intense and deep. Solomon portrays the profound preciousness of love—its beauty, delights and overwhelming power, and says all that one possesses cannot purchase such love—it is God's gift to us, manifested in its fullest form in our marital unions.

The Gift of Purpose

The Apostle Paul declares this profound and marvelous gift to be the "great mystery" finally revealed. It is the union between Christ and His people, as one flesh. Such companionship and intimacy are profound blessings, to be marveled at and enjoyed, bringing contentment and happiness. And in so enjoying, we bring glory to Him—the creator of perhaps *the* greatest gift ever.

Being closely connected to and affectionate with another brings contentment and joy, and at times profound happiness and bliss. These pleasurable states of well-being and connectedness are characterized by a sense

of meaning, and belonging to something bigger in life. And this then is the ultimate purpose and meaning of marriage—it is *God's gift to us, designed to bring us joy and His glory*. With this gift He covered our loneliness, providing us with the hope of companionship, and the joy of connected intimacy—with Him and with one another.

“At last!”

the man

exclaimed.

“This one is

bone from my

bone, and flesh

from my flesh!”

Genesis 2:23

WHAT IS MARRIAGE MENTORING?

marr·iage men·tor·ing

'marr,ij 'men,tôr ing/

“A relationship in which a more experienced couple walks alongside another couple and 1) offers encouragement and support; 2) creates a safe place for deeper conversations; 3) shares life experiences and insights; 4) acts as a conduit of Christ’s love and blessings; 5) models grace and hope that enhances marital intimacy and brings glory to God.”

Grace, C. (2015)

1. Walking Alongside and Encouraging
2. Safe Places for Deep Conversations
3. Sharing Life Experiences
4. Planning on His Presence
5. Modeling Grace and Hope
6. Bringing Glory to God

In a study* completed by researchers associated with a marriage preparation program (PREPARE), 86 percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the utilization of mentor couples was valuable and effective for their marriage. When couples take proactive steps to grow in intimacy, to seek out other,

more experienced couples, they will often find their marriages moving—from striving to thriving—toward being more healthy, happy and Christ-like.

All mentor couples seek to model and fulfill the components of the above definition. It is important to note that these mentor (coaching) couples are not (necessarily) licensed therapists or counselors. Marriage mentoring is not therapy or professional counseling, and if the situation arises, mentor couples will refer to professional or licensed therapists. Also, mentors are not (necessarily) pastors or professors.

While there may be some instruction in marriage skills, the main focus of marriage mentoring is not on teaching, critiquing or fixing marriages—it is primarily in walking alongside and encouraging another couple.

*Wages, S. Anderson Darling, C. A. (2004) *Evaluation of a marriage preparation program (PREPARE) using marriage mentors. Marriage & Family Journal 7(2), 103-121*

13 CHARACTERISTICS OF IDEAL MENTORS

(adapted from Brad Johnson, 2002)

- | | | |
|----------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Caring | 6. Empathic | 10. Emotionally intelligent |
| 2. Supportive | 7. Competent | 11. A good listener |
| 3. Encouraging | 8. Patient | 12. Spiritually mature |
| 4. Kind | 9. Appropriately humorous | 13. Passionate for helping couples |
| 5. Poised | | |

Johnson, W. B. (2002) *The Intentional Mentor: Strategies and Guidelines for the Practice of Mentoring. Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, Vol. 33, No. 1, 88-96*



Setting Expectations

Purpose

The goal for this time is to prepare for and discuss the next 12 sessions, set expectations and establish a pattern for meeting together as couples. The hope is that you will get to know each other, encourage one another and walk alongside each other, growing closer in your marriage, and closer to God.

Key Idea

As stated earlier, marriage mentoring is a relationship in which a more experienced couple walks alongside another couple and 1) offers encouragement and support; 2) creates a safe place for deeper conversations; 3) shares life experiences and insights; 4) is a conduit of Christ's love and blessings; and 5) models grace and hope that enhances marital intimacy and brings glory to God.

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Colossians 3:17

Basic Guidelines and Commitments

During the first session it is important to establish ground rules for what will take place over the next 12 sessions. Besides the basics of dates, time and location, both couples should be willing to make the following commitments:

- We agree that we will pray for each other.
- We agree that we fully expect God to be present at each of our meetings, directing and guiding our conversations.
- We agree that we will work to establish meetings that are fun, encouraging and uplifting in nature.
- We agree that we will commit to meeting together on this journey of mentoring, establishing a thoughtful, trusting relationship with each other.
- We agree to maintain confidentiality, safeguarding conversations and topics shared, establishing a "safe" place to talk about deeper issues.
- We agree to complete, as best as possible, all agreed-upon homework (e.g., readings or surveys) that are to be discussed in subsequent weeks.
- We agree to be honest, sharing the truth in love.
- We agree to share/not share answers with each other as instructed in the workbook.