



Conversations

STARTERS
FOR COUPLES

BY DR. GREG AND ERIN SMALLEY



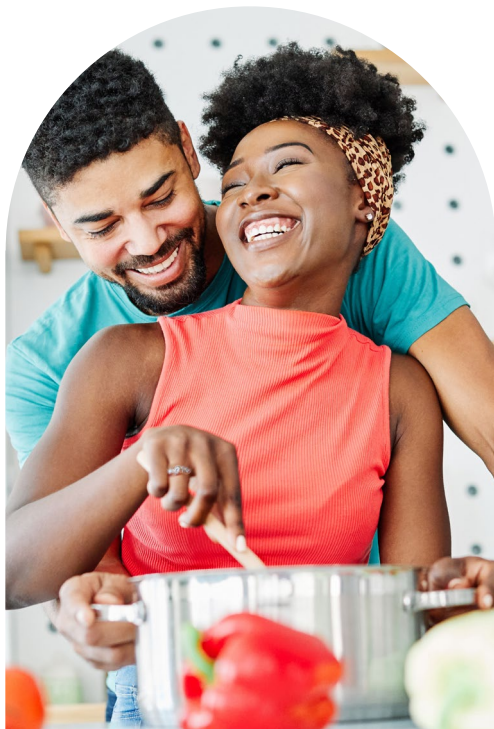
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DATE .01

COOKING *together*

Eating out is a classic date, but it can sometimes be hard to get to a restaurant. So, make dining at home special by cooking together!

We've included a couple of recipes in the following pages. Feeling competitive? You can make it a cooking competition by picking some random ingredients and seeing who can make the tastiest dish! And if all else fails, you can always get takeout of your favorite food. Just don't forget to light some candles and play nice music to make it a bit different from your average dinner at home!

SUPPLIES

- A fun recipe
- Ingredients
- Candles, a tablecloth, or anything else to add ambiance
- A romantic playlist

CONVERSATION STARTERS

What is your favorite meal that I make and what is special about it?

What new recipes would you like to try cooking together?

How do you think cooking together improved our teamwork?

How is this meal experience different because we cooked the food together?

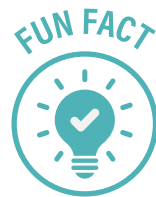
Did you learn anything about me during this process of making a meal together?

What are some things I've done for you in the past that really made you feel loved?

What's your favorite type of cuisine or dish to eat together?

What is your ideal date night?

What are some favorite things we used to do as a couple in the early days of our marriage?



The average American spends more than \$2,500 dining out.¹



Make all your mealtimes more harmonious by talking about what responsibilities you'll share. Maybe one of you can load the dishwasher while the other wipes down the kitchen!²



When you pray before your meal, pray for another couple you know.



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RECIPE

RIGATONI³

PREP TIME | BAKE TIME | SERVES
30 MIN | 30 MIN | 4

INGREDIENTS

- 16 ounces rigatoni pasta
- 4 ounces Swiss cheese (shredded)
- 4 ounces mozzarella (shredded)
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 pound Italian sausage
- 2 15-ounce cans of diced tomatoes
- 1 yellow onion
- 4 garlic cloves
- 1 tablespoon Italian seasoning
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon olive oil

Want to take it to the next level?

ADD THIS TASTY SIDE SALAD!

CAPRESE *Salad*

PREP TIME | SERVES
10 MIN | 4

INGREDIENTS

- 3 vine-ripe tomatoes
- 16 ounces fresh mozzarella
- 16 fresh basil leaves
- Extra virgin olive oil
- Balsamic vinegar glaze or reduction
- Salt and pepper

DIRECTIONS

1. Use a serrated knife to slice mozzarella into even rounds.
2. Place tomato on its side. With the same knife, slice off stem and bottom of the tomato, then parallel cut the remaining tomato into 5 or 6 uniform rounds.
3. Arrange mozzarella and tomatoes into preferred display and layer with basil leaves.
4. Drizzle extra virgin olive oil and balsamic vinegar glaze over top.
5. Salt and pepper to taste.
6. Serve chilled.

DIRECTIONS

Pasta

1. In a pot of water, add a drizzle of olive oil, one teaspoon of salt, and the rigatoni. Cook according to package directions.
2. When tender, drain the pasta in a colander and return to the cooking pot (no heat).
3. Stir in one to two ladles of sauce to add color and flavor.

Meat Sauce & Layering

4. In a large pot with lid (Dutch oven), brown meat on high heat until browned all the way through.
5. Add diced onion and garlic to the pot. Sauté until the onion is translucent.
6. Add tomatoes, Italian seasoning, and sugar to the meat mixture. Stir.
7. Cover and reduce heat to a simmer.
8. Butter a deep (4-5 inches) baking dish. Cover the bottom of the dish with half of the pasta. Top with half of the swiss and mozzarella. Repeat to make two layers (or one layer if using a 9 by 13 inch baking dish).
9. Bake pasta at 350°F for up to 30 minutes, or until cheese is fully melted. Remove from oven. Serve with sauce ladled over the top.



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DATE .02

TRYING A *new craft*

Learn a new skill together while making something fun to remember your date by! Here are some ideas to get your creative juices flowing:

- Follow a painting tutorial online
- Take a woodworking or pottery class
- Make seasonal décor
- Print photos of yourselves and get scrapbooking

SUPPLIES

- A craft tutorial or class
- Supplies to make your chosen craft
- A positive attitude - mistakes are just happy accidents!

CONVERSATION STARTERS

What were some of your favorite hobbies as a child?

Have any of those hobbies retained your interest as an adult?

What are some of the key things that make your favorite hobbies enjoyable?

If you had unlimited time and funds, what hobby would you pursue?

What is your favorite way to relax and unwind?

How do you like to spend quiet time alone?

What's your favorite thing to do together?

What is one thing you'd like to do more in our relationship?

What is a skill or talent you admire in me?

FUN FACT



Almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of crafters say they enjoy the process of crafting more than the finished product.⁴

MARRIAGE BOOSTER



Long term couples often stop doing new things together. Novel activities prevent boredom in marriage, so whether it's crafting, traveling, or another hobby, keep trying new things!⁵

SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE



Think about the talents God has given you both. What are some ways you're using them, or could use them to help others?



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DATE .03 HAVE *a picnic*

There's something magical about laying a blanket out, sitting on the ground, and eating some picnic food. Whether you take advantage of a sunny day at the park, hang out in your backyard, or spread out in your living room, it's sure to bring novelty to your mealtime!

SUPPLIES

- A big blanket
- Finger foods (or get messy - we won't judge!)

CONVERSATION STARTERS

What is on your bucket list? Is there anything you feel you must accomplish before you die?

How do you envision our future together?

What are the top five qualities that you hope our children will have?

What's a memory that always makes you smile?

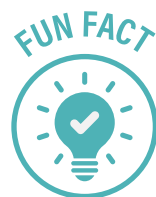
What are some of the ways you like to be shown that someone loves you?

What is your favorite memory of us together?

What are some things I've done for you in the past that really made you feel loved?

Where would you consider our special place to be? Why is it meaningful to you?

What's the most romantic thing I've ever done for you?



The word "picnic" comes from the French word "pique-nique," which means to pick at little things.



Every meal can't be a picnic, but make sure you're eating together regularly as a couple! Mealtimes let you share the day's events, decompress, get encouragement, and acknowledge God's provision every day.⁶



When praying for your meal, pray for those around the world who don't have enough food to eat, and give thanks to God for blessing you with enough for this meal.



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DATE .04

RELAXING *at the spa*

Sure, you can splurge for a date at a real spa - but here are some other ideas to try at home:

- Give each other massages
- Do face masks together (and laugh at how silly you look)
- Soak your feet in Epsom salts
- Take a bath together

SUPPLIES

- A relaxing smelling candle or diffuser
- Massage oil
- Face masks
- Bath supplies

CONVERSATION STARTERS

What is your favorite way to show love and appreciation?

What are some of the ways you like to be shown that someone loves you?

In what ways do you like to be romanced?

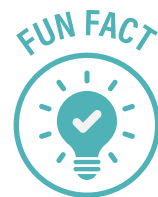
What's a dream vacation you would like to take together?

Is meaningful touch your primary love language? What kind of touch do you respond to?

What first attracted you to me?

What was your first impression of me?

What is one way I can let you know I cherish you during the coming week?



After a massage, levels of the stress hormone cortisol drop 31%, while levels of feel-good hormones like dopamine and serotonin increase roughly 30%, according to one Australian study.⁷



Massages are fun, but simple touches, like walking through a mall together hand in hand, or sitting close together on the sofa watching television, also build intimacy in your marriage.⁸



Intimacy is a gift God gives married couples, but the world often tries to attack this special bond. Pray together for the Lord to help you stay strong against temptation, and for him to help you keep your marriage bed pure for one another.



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DATE .05

GIVING

small gifts

Swapping gifts is a sweet way to share your love for one another. It doesn't have to just happen on holidays - and it doesn't have to break the bank, either! Have a fun date with these low-cost ideas:

- Find books for each other at the library, then go home and read them.
- Go to a candy store (or just the local grocery store) and pick out a sweet treat you think the other person will like.
- Shop for each other at the thrift store - and laugh at some of the kooky stuff you find!



CONVERSATION STARTERS

What is the best gift I've ever given you and why is it so special?

What is your favorite appliance or piece of furniture that we've bought together?

How important is our home environment to creating good memories for us and our children?

What was your all-time favorite Christmas gift?

What's the worst Christmas gift you've ever received?

What is one gift I can give you this year that doesn't cost money?

In what ways do you feel blessed in our marriage?

What do you think is the secret behind couples that have been happily married for over 50 years?



63% of people consider gift giving their primary love language.⁹



If receiving gifts is one of your love languages, anything that shows thoughtfulness counts! Try giving things like home-cooked food, flowers you've picked, or things you've made.¹⁰



While you're out, consider getting something for someone you feel called to show kindness to. Knowing they were on your hearts could be the encouragement they need!



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DATE .06

GOING *for a stroll*

Walking or hiking together is a great way to connect while staying healthy! Take the scenic route through streets you don't usually walk down, or hike a trail you've never been on before. You never know what you might see!

SUPPLIES

- A path
- Good shoes
- A water bottle and trail mix for longer treks

CONVERSATION STARTERS

How important is physical fitness to you?

What are three things you have done in your life that you are most proud of?

Over the past five years, how do you think you've grown as a person?

What was your first impression of me?

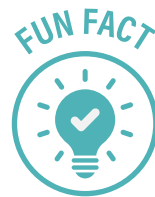
When did you know I was the "the one," the person you wanted to marry?

Where would you consider our special place to be? Why is it meaningful to you?

What is one thing God has been teaching you lately?

What are some spiritual goals you have for us as a couple?

What's a memory that always makes you smile?



Walking is good for your body, but it's great for your mood too, especially when you walk through nature.¹¹



A longer hike or stroll is a great date, but taking a brisk walk together after dinner each night can strengthen your body, and your marriage.¹²



God designed us with the need to feed, move, hydrate and rest our bodies, and he calls us to care for ourselves. Think of other ways you can stay healthy together!



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DATE .07 SERVING *together*

Volunteering as a couple can bring you together as you partake in God's calling to love your neighbor. Not sure where to start? Ask your church if there are any opportunities to volunteer. Whether you give away cans at the food pantry, clean up an elderly neighbor's yard, or help out at the pregnancy center, you'll remember the good you did together.

SUPPLIES

- A service project
- Prayers before, during, and after
- A big smile and a warm heart

CONVERSATION STARTERS

How did you feel about the service project we completed together?

What are some other ways we can serve others together as a couple?

What are some ways we can show Christ's love to our neighbors and community?

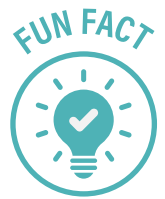
Was your own family involved in community service? If so, was it considered an obligation or a privilege?

How important is it for Christians to be involved in acts of service?

How can we make acts of love and service a regular part of our marriage and family life rather than just isolated, one-time events?

How do you see God working in our lives right now?

What are some ways we can show gratitude for God's blessings in our marriage?



Studies have found that volunteering is associated with better health - and even better employment.¹³



Combining your time and talents in service can help you realize how well you work together - many people find they are more effective working as a couple than they would have been as individuals!¹⁴



Keep searching for ways to serve and show God's love to others!



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DATE .08 WATCHING *a movie*

You can head to the movie theater and enjoy a classic date - but you can also enjoy a fun movie for a fraction of the price at home! Just make sure to grab a fun snack and drink so it feels like a special occasion. And if you can't decide on a movie, try writing a few down on slips of paper, put them into a jar, and pick one out at random.

SUPPLIES

- Popcorn (or another snack - just nothing too crunchy!)
- A fun beverage
- A movie

CONVERSATION STARTERS

What was your favorite part of the movie, and our evening?

What is a book or movie that has influenced you?

What are your top five movies of all time?

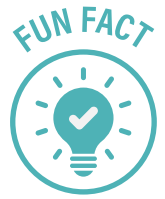
What is your favorite movie or TV show to watch together?

How do you handle disagreements or conflicts?

How do you handle change or uncertainty?

Are there some silly or odd quirks about me that you find irresistibly funny? (Don't laugh at your spouse's expense or be cruel.)

How do you think we've both changed since we first met?



The average American spends about \$303 on entertainment per month.¹⁵



We love happily ever afters - but it's good to remember that, in real life, "happily ever after" is a lifelong journey we take together.¹⁶



No matter what entertainment you consume, be mindful of the themes and make sure to judge the messages based on Scripture!



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DATE .09 DRIVING *around*

Why not make driving the main event? Plan a mini road trip to somewhere just a bit farther than you usually drive. Or just drive around and take in the sights of your area - autumn leaves, spring blooms, and Christmas lights are all great reasons to have a look!



CONVERSATION STARTERS

If money were no object, what type of car would you get?

What outfit of mine is your favorite? Why?

How do you feel we can grow spiritually together as a couple?

What has been your favorite house or place we've lived and why?

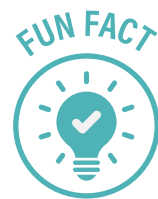
Do you have a favorite type of music? A favorite singer? Or a musical group?

What would you consider to be our song? Why is it so meaningful to you?

What is a lesson you've learned from our relationship?

Is there a particular church service or ceremony we've attended that was especially meaningful to you? Why?

What is one thing you appreciate about our relationship?



The world's first speeding ticket was given to someone driving at 8 mph.¹⁷



Whenever you're in the car together, embrace the opportunity to connect through conversation.¹⁸



As you pray for a safe drive, pray for everyone else who's traveling at the moment - whether by land, sea, or air.



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DATE .10 SWITCHING *hobbies*

We all have things we do together, and things we do on our own. But for one date, switch it up and see what your spouse is passionate about! You can try out the sport or art they're obsessed with, or even see if there's an event or place related to their passion that they're dying to check out. You'll learn a lot about each other. Just make sure to take turns sharing your hobbies!



CONVERSATION STARTERS

What is one thing you learned about me that you didn't know before?

If you had to take a paid sabbatical and couldn't work for an entire year, what would you most like to do?

What would you like to learn more about? How can we work together to expand our knowledge on that subject as a couple?

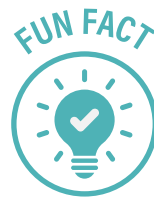
What other topics can we explore together as a couple?

How can we make learning fun?

What are some ways we can keep a spirit of discovery and adventure in our marriage?

What is one thing you've always wanted to try but haven't yet? (e.g., play the piano, learn a foreign language, fly a plane, etc.)

What does it mean to you to be a student of me?



People who have hobbies report better health, more happiness, fewer symptoms of depression, and higher life satisfaction than those who don't.¹⁹



Being open-minded about each other's hobbies can help you understand each other better and draw you closer.²⁰



Think about the different gifts you, your spouse, and your family and friends have. Then, let your loved ones know how much you appreciate the unique strengths God has gifted them with! When we all embrace our giftings, we build a strong community.



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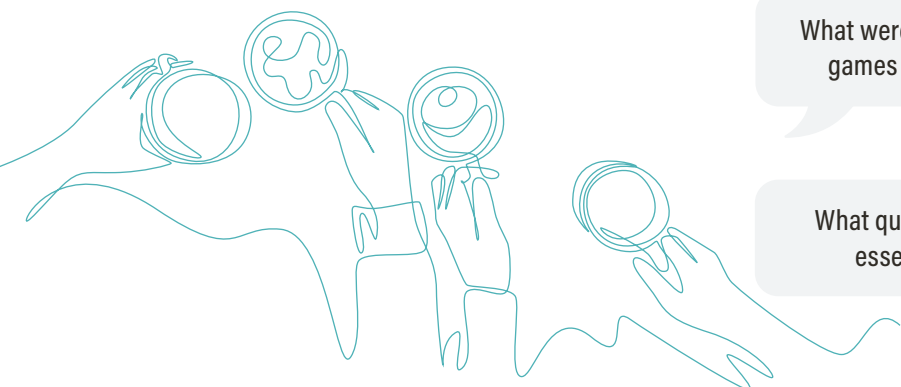


DATE .11

DOUBLE

dating

Spending time with another couple can help you remember that you aren't going through life alone. Pick a fun activity like mini golf or bowling for a more active experience - or grab a coffee or throw a small dinner party to get the conversation flowing. Either way, you're sure to draw closer to other married couples in your life.



CONVERSATION STARTERS

Did your parents go on dates when you were young?

What is your ideal date night?

What are three things you have done in your life that you are most proud of?

How would you share your testimony with me if I were a new acquaintance?

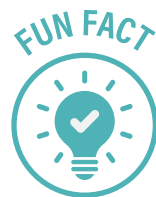
What is a favorite memory from a vacation or trip?

What is the best advice you've ever received about relationships?

What is your favorite season or time of the year?

What were some of your favorite games and toys as a child?

What qualities do you see as essential in a friend?



In the 1950s, double dating was a popular way to get to know someone before moving on to dating them one-on-one.²¹



Double dating can be a fun way to invest in another couple – and strengthen your own marriage in the process!²²



Community keeps marriages and faith strong. If you haven't been married very long, consider finding an older couple to mentor you. If you've been married for a number of years, consider mentoring another couple.



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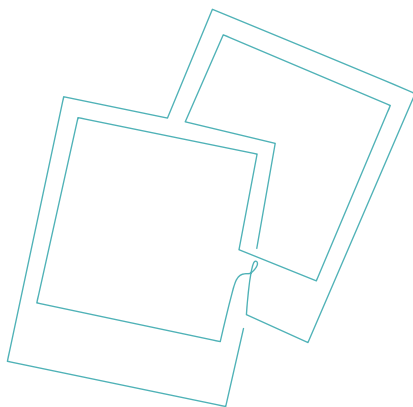


DATE .12

REMEMBERING *the past*

No matter how long you've been married, it's always nostalgic to remember the time when your relationship was new. Here are some ideas on how to capture the joy of the past:

- Redo your first date
- Visit places you went to when your relationship was new
- Look at old photos together



CONVERSATION STARTERS

What was going through your mind on our first date?

Do you remember any funny stories from our wedding day?

If we had the chance to do our wedding again, would you want to change anything?

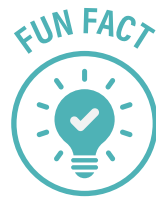
What are some of your favorite memories from our honeymoon?

What are some of your favorite things we used to do as a couple in the early days of our marriage?

Can we start doing some of those things again, even with the realities of our busier lifestyle?

(If you have children) What was your reaction when you first found out that we were going to be parents?

Name two special memories you cherish about our early days that have nothing to do with the big events of our relationship. Why are those memories so special to you?



Each memory forms new connections between neurons. That means each beloved memory with your spouse has altered your brain!²³



Remembering your blessings sweetens a relationship! Take time each day this week to name one thing you're grateful for about your spouse, your marriage, or the life you've built together.²⁴



Take time in prayer and thank God for drawing you together, and for granting you each blessing that's happened throughout your marriage.

Bonus!

MARRIAGE ASSESSMENT

Keep strengthening your bond by taking the Marriage Assessment!

TAKE THE ASSESSMENT!

Visit [FocusOnTheFamily.com/TheMarriageAssessment](https://www.FocusOnTheFamily.com/TheMarriageAssessment)

CONVERSATION *Starters*

GENERAL CONVERSATION STARTERS

- What is your favorite meal that I make and what is special about it?
- What has been your most positive spiritual experience during our marriage?
- What three things have you done in our marriage that you're most proud of?
- What are three things you have done in your life that you are most proud of?
- If you could live one year of your life all over again without changing a thing, what year would you choose? Why?
- Over the past five years, how do you think you've grown as a person?
- What is something you're passionate about?
- In what ways do you feel blessed in our marriage?
- What is the best gift I've ever given you and why is it so special?
- What is your favorite memory of us together?
- What is a favorite memory from a vacation or trip?
- What do I do that is the biggest turn-on for you?
- What outfit of mine is your favorite? Why?
- Is there a particular church service or ceremony we've attended that was especially meaningful to you? Why?
- What is the best advice you've ever received about relationships?
- What is your favorite appliance or piece of furniture that we've bought together?
- What is your favorite tradition that we've started?
- What has been your favorite house or place we've lived and why?
- What is your favorite holiday we've had together and why?
- What are some things I've done for you in the past that really made you feel loved?
- Where would you consider our special place to be? Why is it meaningful to you?
- What's the most romantic thing I've ever done for you?
- Out of all the date nights we've experienced together thus far, which one has been your favorite? Why?
- What do you think is our greatest strength as a couple?
- What's your version of our love story?
- What do you think is the secret behind couples that have been happily married for over 50 years?
- What is a lesson you've learned from our relationship?
- What is your favorite childhood memory?
- What is a book or movie that has influenced you?
- What are your top five movies of all time?
- What is your favorite season or time of the year?
- Do you have a favorite type of music? A favorite singer? Or a musical group?
- If money were no object, what type of car would you get?
- What was the best job you ever had? Why?
- If you could create the perfect job and get paid well for it, what would it be?
- If you inherited \$200,000, what would you do with the money?

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TEAMWORK

- What are some famous teams you admire? (These can be sports teams or other famous collaborators such as musicians, actors, etc.)
- What makes these famous teams inspiring to you? What makes them work well together?
- What are some positive goals we can set for our marriage over the next six months? The next year?
- What is one thing we can do together to achieve your top goal?
- Is there a specific area you feel God wants us to work on together, as a team, to make our marriage the best it can be?
- What are some practical steps we can take to ensure that we're always working as a team?
- What is a challenge we've overcome as a team?
- How do you handle stress or difficult situations?
- How do you like to handle finances and budgeting?

HOBBIES

- What were some of your favorite hobbies as a child?
- Have any of those hobbies retained your interest as an adult?
- What are some of the key things that make your favorite hobbies enjoyable?
- Do you prefer activities that are more physical in nature or those that provide a mental challenge?
- How do you like to spend time outdoors?
- Are there any activities that are daring or risky that you'd like to do? (Skydiving, bungee jumping, scuba diving, big-game hunting, etc.)
- If you had unlimited time and funds, what hobby would you pursue?
- What are some ways I can show you I'm interested in you and want to know you better?
- If someone wanted to finance the startup of your business with no strings attached, what business would you start?

SPIRITUALITY AND GRACE

- How would you share your testimony with me if I were a new acquaintance?
- What was it like when you made the decision to accept Christ as your Savior and Lord?
- What one person in your life has been most influential in shaping your view of God?
- How can I pray for you?
- What have you been learning during your times of personal prayer and Scripture reading?
- What recent sermons have impacted you at church?
- How can we continue to help each other grow spiritually on a regular basis?
- How would you define grace? Why is it so important?
- How can we extend grace to each other? To our children? To our extended family? In other relationships?
- How has your faith influenced our relationship?
- What is your favorite Bible verse or passage, and why?
- How do you feel we can grow spiritually together as a couple?
- What are some ways we can incorporate prayer into our daily routine?



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- How do you feel God has guided our marriage?
- What are some spiritual goals you have for us as a couple?
- How can we support each other in our faith journeys?
- How do you experience God's presence in your daily life?
- What are some Christian books or authors that have inspired you?
- How can we make our home a place that reflects our faith?
- What are some of the spiritual gifts you believe God has given you?
- What is a recent answered prayer that you feel grateful for?
- How do you find comfort in God's promises during difficult times?
- What are some of your favorite worship songs or hymns?
- How has your faith shaped your views on marriage and family?
- What are some ways we can demonstrate forgiveness and grace in our marriage?
- What are some of the challenges you face in your spiritual life, and how can I support you?
- How do you see God working in our lives right now?
- What are some ways we can show gratitude for God's blessings in our marriage?
- What are some traditions or rituals we can establish to strengthen our faith as a family?
- How do you feel about going on a spiritual retreat or mission trip together?
- What are some ways we can keep our faith strong during challenging seasons in our marriage?
- What are some of your favorite memories of us attending church or spiritual events together?
- How can we keep Christ at the center of our relationship?

LAUGHTER

- What makes you laugh?
- What's a memory that always makes you smile?
- Are there some silly or odd quirks about me that you find irresistibly funny? (Don't laugh at your spouse's expense or be cruel.)
- Do you have happy childhood memories?
- What were some of your favorite games and toys as a child?
- How did your family view playtime? Was it frowned upon or encouraged?
- As a child, were you afraid to try new things? Why or why not?

PHYSICAL FITNESS

- How important is physical fitness to you?
- How can we encourage each other (and our kids) in the pursuit of a balanced approach to physical fitness – not too lax and not too extreme?
- How can I support you with your fitness goals this week?



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OUR HOME

- What specific rooms, pieces of furniture, colors or designs made an impression on you in your childhood home?
- What special memories do you have of your living space as a child?
- How important is our home environment to creating good memories for us and our children?
- How would you describe your dream house? (Location, architecture style, square footage, floors, bedrooms, amenities, décor, yard, etc.)
- If you had to pick a different city to live in, and proximity to family and friends didn't matter, which city would it be?

TRADITIONS

- Did you have special traditions in your family growing up? What were they?
- What do you remember most about them?
- What is a daily routine or ritual that is important to you?
- What are some of your favorite traditions or rituals in our relationship?
- How can we create and maintain traditions for our marriage and family?
- Is there a tradition or ritual you would like to start together?

FRIENDSHIP

- Whom did you consider your best friend as a child?
- In what ways is having a same-sex best friend similar to having me as your best friend? In what ways is it different?
- What qualities do you see as essential in a friend?
- How can we work to forge stronger bonds of friendship in our marriage?

QUALITY TIME

- What is your favorite way to relax and unwind?
- How do you like to start your day?
- How do you like to spend quiet time alone?
- What's your favorite way to spend the weekend?
- What is your favorite way to connect and communicate?
- What's your favorite thing to do together?
- What is your favorite movie or TV show to watch together?
- [If you have children] After we put the kids down for bed, what would be your ideal way to spend the evening together?
- What is one thing you'd like to do more in our relationship?
- What is a place you'd love to visit together?
- How do you like to spend time with family and friends?



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LOVE AND ADMIRATION

- What is your favorite way to show love and appreciation?
- What are some of the ways you like to be shown that someone loves you?
- In what ways do you like to be romanced?
- What is one thing you appreciate about our relationship?
- What is a skill or talent you admire in me?
- What is a quality you admire in others?

SPECIAL OCCASIONS

- How do you like to spend holidays or special occasions?
- How do you like to celebrate achievements or milestones?
- How do you like to be surprised?

HANDLING CHALLENGES

- How do you handle disagreements or conflicts?
- How do you like to be comforted when you're upset?
- How do you handle change or uncertainty?

DREAMS AND THE FUTURE

- Your dream could be something as simple as learning how to sew or cook or as grandiose as owning property on a lake or going on a trip around the world. Are there things you set aside when we got married that you'd like to consider pursuing?
- Is it wise to pursue them now? Is it possible?
- If so, how can I support you in achieving those dreams?
- What is something you'd like to achieve in the next year?
- Do you get a lot of satisfaction from your job? Do you feel you are somehow making a difference?
- Where do you hope to be in your career 10 years from now? Fifteen years?
- What goals do you have for us as a couple in the years ahead?
- What are your retirement plans?
- How do you envision our future together?
- What aspects of our relationship do you want to enhance together on the road ahead?
- What are some ways we can serve others together as a couple?
- What are some ways we can show Christ's love to our neighbors and community?
- What's a dream vacation you would like to take together?
- What is on your bucket list? Is there anything you feel you must accomplish before you die?
- If you had to take a paid sabbatical and couldn't work for an entire year, what would you most like to do?
- What are the top five qualities that you hope our children will have?

MANNERS

- When a man holds the door for a woman, is that courteous or sexist?
- Was your family big on manners and decorum? How did that make you feel?
- How can we encourage good manners in our home without becoming legalistic?
- How important are manners amid the craziness of everyday life?
- Learning new things
- What would you like to learn more about? How can we work together to expand our knowledge on that subject as a couple?
- What other topics can we explore intellectually together as a couple?
- How can we make learning fun?
- What are some ways we can keep a spirit of discovery and adventure in our marriage?
- What is one thing you've always wanted to try but haven't yet? (e.g., play the piano, learn a foreign language, fly a plane, etc.)

COOKING

- What new recipes would you like to try cooking together?
- How do you think cooking together has improved our teamwork?
- How is this meal experience different because we cooked the food together?
- Did you learn anything about me during this process of making a meal together?
- What's your favorite type of cuisine or dish to eat together?

TENDERNESS AND TOUCH

- What things do I do that communicate tenderness toward you?
- Are there other ways I can communicate tenderness on a regular basis?
- Were your parents tender toward each other? How?
- Especially after long, tough days, how can we make a concerted effort to reconnect and show tenderness and empathy?
- Is meaningful touch your primary love language?
- How would you feel if I put my arm around you in church or reached out for your hand when we're walking?
- What kind of touch do you respond to?
- What are some other ways we can incorporate meaningful touch into our daily routine?

SERVICE PROJECTS

- How did you feel about the last service project we completed together?
- Was your own family involved in community service? If so, was it considered an obligation or a privilege?
- How important is it for Christians to be involved in acts of service?
- How can we make acts of love and service a regular part of our marriage and family life rather than just isolated, one-time events?



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ON DATING

- Did your parents go on dates when you were young?
- Did they model a healthy marriage for you?
- Can our own commitment to marital dating model healthy marriage concepts for our kids?
- Which of our dates do you consider some of your favorites?
- Which ones didn't turn out the way you expected?
- Which ones would you not care to repeat?
- How can we continue to make dating a priority in our marriage over the months and years ahead?
- What is your ideal date night?

BIRTHDAYS

- What are some of your favorite birthday memories from childhood?
- What makes them so special?
- What is your favorite birthday activity as an adult?
- What feelings do you have when you consider having birthdays and getting older?
- How can I help make sure that birthdays for you are uplifting and fulfilling?

LET'S REMINISCE ABOUT ... OUR FIRST DATE

- What first attracted you to me?
- What was your first impression of me?
- What was going through your mind on our first date?
- Were your friends and family members enthusiastic about the prospect of our dating?
- Were you nervous before our first date?
- After that first date, did you have any second thoughts about moving forward in our relationship?
- How do you think we've both changed since we first met?

LET'S REMINISCE ABOUT ... OUR ENGAGEMENT

- When did you know I was the person you wanted to marry?
- What were some of your impressions of the day we got engaged?
- What would you consider to be our song? Why is it so meaningful to you?

LET'S REMINISCE ABOUT ... OUR WEDDING

- Do you remember any funny stories from our wedding day?
- Aside from the standard exchange of vows, what do you recall about the pastor's message?
- If we had the chance to do our wedding again, would you want to change anything?
- What are some of your favorite memories from our honeymoon?

LET'S REMINISCE ABOUT ... THE EARLY DAYS

- What are some of your favorite things we used to do as a couple in the early days of our marriage?
- Can we start doing some of those things again, even with the realities of our busier lifestyle?
- Name two special memories you cherish about our early days that have nothing to do with the big events of our relationship. Why are those memories so special to you?
- [If you have children] What was your reaction when you first found out that we were going to be parents?

LET'S REMINISCE ABOUT ... VALENTINE'S DAY CELEBRATIONS

- What memories do you have of our first Valentine's Day together?
- What are some of your favorite Valentine's Day memories from our marriage?
- Let's see if we can make a list, by year, of all our Valentine's Day dates up to this point.

LET'S REMINISCE ABOUT ... CHRISTMASSES GONE BY

- What was your all-time favorite Christmas gift?
- What's the worst Christmas gift you've ever received?
- What is one of your favorite Christmas memories?
- What is one gift I can give you this year that doesn't cost money?
- What Christmas activity do you enjoy most?
- Growing up, did your family ever engage in an act of service to others around the holidays?

QUESTIONS TO ASK AT THE END OF EACH DATE NIGHT (PICK ONE OR TWO)

- What was your favorite part of the evening?
- What is one thing you learned about me tonight that you didn't know before?
- What is one way I can let you know I cherish you during the coming week?
- What are some ways I can support you this coming week?
- How can I encourage you as you face upcoming challenges this week?
- What do you dread during the week that I can help you face?
- What are some practical steps we can take to stay current with each other?
- What does it mean to you to be a student of me?
- What are some of the little things I did for you on our date that you appreciated?
- Over the course of this week, how did I demonstrate my love for you?
- What are some ways I can more effectively communicate that I love you?

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FUN *Facts*

1. The average American spends more than \$2,500 dining out.
2. Almost ¾ of crafters say they enjoy the process of crafting more than the finished product.
3. The word “picnic” comes from the French word “pique-nique,” which means to pick at little things.
4. After a massage, levels of the stress hormone cortisol drop 31%, while levels of feel-good hormones like dopamine and serotonin increase roughly 30%, according to one Australian study.
5. 63% of people consider gift giving their primary love language.
6. Walking is good for your body, but it’s great for your mood too, especially when you walk through nature.
7. Studies have found that volunteering is associated with better health - and even better employment.
8. The average American spends about \$303 on entertainment per month.
9. The world’s first speeding ticket was given to someone driving at 8 mph.
10. People who have hobbies report better health, more happiness, fewer symptoms of depression, and higher life satisfaction than those who don’t.
11. In the 1950s, double dating was a popular way to get to know someone before moving on to dating them one-on-one.
12. Each memory forms new connections between neurons. That means each beloved memory with your spouse has altered your brain!

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MARRIAGE *Boosters*



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1. Make all your mealtimes more harmonious by talking about what responsibilities you'll share. Maybe one of you can load the dishwasher while the other wipes down the kitchen!
2. Long-term couples often stop doing new things together. Novel activities prevent boredom in marriage, so whether it's crafting, traveling, or another hobby, keep trying new things!
3. Every meal can't be a picnic, but make sure you're eating together regularly as a couple! Mealtimes let you can share the day's events, decompress, get encouragement, and acknowledge God's provision every day.
4. Massages are fun, but simple touches, like walking through a mall together hand in hand, or sitting close together on the sofa watching television, also build intimacy in your marriage.
5. If receiving gifts is one of your love languages, anything that shows thoughtfulness counts! Try giving things like home-cooked food, flowers you've picked, or things you've made.
6. A longer hike or stroll is a great date, but taking a brisk walk together after dinner each night can strengthen your body, and your marriage.
7. Combining your time and talents in service can help you realize how well you work together - many people find they are more effective working as a couple than they would have been as individuals!
8. We love happily ever afters - but it's good to remember that, in real life, "happily ever after" is a lifelong journey we take together.
9. Whenever you're in the car together, embrace the opportunity to connect through conversation.
10. Being open-minded about each other's hobbies can help you understand each other better and draw you closer.
11. Double dating can be a fun way to invest in another couple — and strengthen your own marriage in the process!
12. Remembering your blessings sweetens a relationship! Take time each day this week to name one thing you're grateful for about your spouse, your marriage, or the life you've built together.

SPIRITUAL *Challenges*



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1. When you pray before your meal, pray for another couple you know.
2. Think about the talents God has given you both. What are some ways you're using them, or could use them to help others?
3. When praying for your meal, pray for those around the world who don't have enough food to eat, and give thanks to God for blessing you with enough for this meal.
4. Intimacy is a gift God gives married couples, but the world often tries to attack this special bond. Pray together for the Lord to help you stay strong against temptation, and fir him to help you keep your marriage bed pure for one another.
5. While you're out, consider getting something for someone you feel called to show kindness to. Knowing they were on your hearts could be the encouragement they need!
6. God designed us with the need to feed, move, hydrate and rest our bodies, and he calls us to care for ourselves. Think of other ways you can stay healthy together!
7. Keep searching for ways to serve and show God's love to others!
8. No matter what entertainment you consume, be mindful of the themes and make sure to judge the messages based on Scripture!
9. As you pray for a safe drive, pray for everyone else who's traveling at the moment - whether by land, sea, or air.
10. Think about the different gifts you, your spouse, and your family and friends have. Then, let your loved ones know how much you appreciate the unique strengths God has gifted them with! When we all embrace our giftings, we build a strong community.
11. Community keeps marriages and faith strong. If you haven't been married very long, consider finding an older couple to mentor you. If you've been married for a number of years, consider mentoring another couple.
12. Take time in prayer and thank God for drawing you together, and for granting you each blessing that's happened throughout your marriage.

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