

MENTORS MANUAL

The pre-engagement course has been developed to help seriously dating couples move towards marriage in a wise and biblical way. The task of the mentors is to facilitate couples in considering their relationship in the light of the realities of marriage and then to continue moving towards marriage or to push pause on the relationship. This is a special privilege as you get to journey with people towards the most exciting decision they can make, besides following Christ! For a better understanding of the pre-engagement course and the roles of mentors keep reading, along with reading the actual course material.

Who do we journey with?

You will either be paired up with a couple that have been suggested to you by a pastor or you may be asked by a couple who know you well to mentor them. If you're unsure that you should do this, confer with a pastor on the matter. It is suggested that you build a friendship with the couple so as to truly understand them and with confidence help them to make decisions about their relationship.

Try to ensure that the couple you are going to walk with are ready for this. We suggest that the couple should have been dating for a decent length of time, about 9 months to a year before they consider this journey, and that they are in a life space that warrants considering marriage in the not too distant future. They should show a good level of relational health and commitment and be of an age that is reasonable for marriage. Doing this with couples in the wrong life space could cause disappointment and disillusionment. Some people may still need to work through the pre-dating material first, so as to get the basics in place.

Always feel free to invite the wisdom of leaders or elders before or during the journey, whilst maintaining high levels of confidentiality and honor for the couple.

How long is this "course"?

This is up to you. We suggest that no less than 2 - 3 meals together would give you sufficient knowledge of the couple. However, you may think that you need much longer and that to truly have confidence in them for marriage you may need to connect for an indefinite period once every month or so. You may want to schedule your first few meals into your diaries about 1 or 2 weeks apart.

If it takes a long time to get through certain sections of the course, then that's ok. You determine the pace as you read the couple and their situation. You may also get through it quite quickly.

How should we do it?

Your task as mentors is to simply build friendship whilst you go through the answers that the couple has given out of the pre-engagement document. It's best to do this over meals or coffees and to create natural environments either in your home or one of theirs.

Remember that no leaders/mentors are called to give permission on either big or small life decisions, and this course is no different. Your job is to walk with a couple and to ask the necessary questions so as to probe for potentially serious pitfalls in their relationship given your knowledge and experience in marriage. You're not to try to disqualify relationships, because God loves marriage, but at the same time you must remain alert to any red lights that may flash as you get to know the couple. Your task is to commit to seeing healthy and flourishing marriages in our city, and to ensure that you're contributing to that happening through encouraging this couple either towards or away from marriage. It would be important that you have read the book by Tim and Kathy Keller called *The Meaning of Marriage* and have read through the pre-engagement document that your dating couple will go through?

Additional homework and extra sessions

As things emerge, feel free to set them additional homework for the next session e.g. 'please talk through issue X and report back to us at the start of next week's time together'. If a major issue emerges, it is usually best to add a special session with special homework rather than letting that issue dominate one of the existing sessions.

Developing your own style

Be free to adjust things to suit your own style. Some mentor couples prefer to meet over meals and others in a more formal setting. Some develop their own questions that work best for them.

What if you feel out of your depth?

If you hit an issue that you are not sure on, rather than make up an answer, defer it for the night and suggest that you return to that issue next week. In the meantime you can seek advice.

What if you think that they should not get married?

As you approach the end of the course, in the unlikely but possible event of you feeling that they should either delay or not get married, you must, must, must explain this to them, giving them clear reasons. But do discuss this with one of your pastors before taking this action, as it may be a difficult conversation and it needs to be handled in a way that protects both you and them.

On-going friendship and mentoring

Try to stay in close touch with them throughout their engagement, and it is a great idea to get together with them 1-3 months into their marriage to find out how everything is going.

On the night

Pray as a couple before you meet.

The pre-engagement course is divided into 6 sections. Each evening/meeting we suggest that you cover about 3 - 5 sections depending on the couple and what topics require more attention than others.

It's important that you learn to ask good questions and along with that tell your stories. Don't dominate, rather listen and learn about them.

Some good questions:

- How does his/her view make you feel?
- What makes you think that?
- How did you deal with that when it came up?
- How would each of you deal with X if it were to arise?
- Before we give our answer, what does your partner think?

Encourage honesty and sincerity and that there are no right or wrong answers. Be honest and vulnerable yourselves, this will go a long way in truly knowing the couple.

Here are some things to look for in each session:

1. Questions about compatibility

Can you pick up and major discrepancies in the couple's compatibility?

Consider their desires for the future, the nature of their friendship whilst you listen to them.

Encourage things you see are positive and healthy!

Are there any sins that are being depended upon for the unity and connectedness of the couple?

2. Questions that relate to God (these assume you're a Christian)

Is there a reality to their relationships with God? Can you see it in the way they relate to each other and others?

Encourage the evidences of grace and obedience in their lives!

In what way are people in the church involved in their lives ongoingly?

If there is little in the area of following Christ, show them that any people who would like to chart the adventurous territories of marriage would be crazy to do this without joyful and deep commitment to Christ above all else.

3. Questions that relate to the involvement of others

Is there a sense that these 2 people will bring out the best in each other into the future?

How well do others know this couple or are they isolated and needing to spend more time in community? Encourage them towards joining a small group and to deepen if they haven't already.

4. Questions about problem issues in our lives

Is there any glaring aspect of their past that you can see is or will cause problems in the future?

With regards to soul ties, dissuade them from going into too much detail with each other as this can undermine confidence. Be sensitive, as this can be a tender topic for many.

Are you aware of the healing process they have been through from past pains etc? Was it thorough? Is there still some time needed?