

Marriage Mentoring Proposal

Proposal: To Implement a Marriage Mentoring initiative in the body of Christ at Briarwood to provide recently married Briarwood couples with valuable guidance in a relational style from seasoned and trained mentor couples.

Why a marriage mentoring program?

- The lack of Premarital counseling
- Couples have become islands
- The early years of marriage
- The disconnected nature of our society – lack of nurturing, the often opposition of government institutions, like the public school and media – assumes the role of family and church.
- The lack of family models—a plethora of broken homes
- The myths of marriage modeled in society – Social media, TV, movies, romance novels
- The pride of facing keeping – people don't ask for help till it is too late
- The sources of “help” are many times contributors to the problem – self-help books, TV shows

Biblical models of mentoring

Elijah and Elisha I Kings 19

Moses and Joshua Deut. 31 and Joshua 1

Paul and Timothy Acts 16, I Timothy

Jesus and the disciples (See the Gospel narratives)

The church, the logical place of marriage mentoring

The foundation of premarital counseling – foundational knowledge and framework

Officiating the wedding – ceremony and witnessing

Establishing a godly pattern – mentoring

Who are marriage mentors?

Growing Christians

Encouraging guides – experienced, wounded, healed, and growing

Empathetic listeners – willing to listen, asking questions, expressing appreciation for struggles

Successful adjusters of all ages – a good marriage of three years or a good marriage of 50 years will qualify

How do marriage mentors mentor?

Hospitality – Create a warm and inviting atmosphere and plan to invite your mentorees into your home.

Vulnerability – Be willing to share your own struggles and how God led you through them.

Mutuality – Encourage mentorees to ask questions and share their lives.

Give permission to ask questions, even very direct questions, about your lives.

Give permission to the mentorees to fail.

Give assurance that you will not take sides.

Gender perspective – Help mentorees celebrate the differences.

Resource – Be ready to recommend useful and helpful resources.

Marriage Mentors don'ts!

Act as experts – you don't have to have the answer to every question. You can say, "We don't know, but we will find out..."

Lecture – but you may teach as the couple gives permission.

Meddle – don't intrude where it is obvious the couple is not giving permission to go.

Replace family – not surrogate parents, though they may be family substitutes.

Report to the pastor – you don't have any administrative responsibility, so you don't report up, but do encourage them to seek help.

**The exception to the above rule is that in the case of obvious abuse, offer to go with them to the Pastor to seek help. And if they do not, you will ask the Pastor to investigate. This is obviously sinful behavior that cannot be condoned.

Purpose:

- This endeavor could meaningfully and strategically contribute to your church’s mission to glorify God by “equipping Christians to worship God and reach Birmingham to Reach the world for Christ,” one by which we are providing opportunities for those in our congregation to “love purposefully” and “learn consistently” through the mentoring of young married couples.
- To give younger couples timely perspective and encouragement during a season when they are more ready to receive it - coming out of the highly “romanticized” engagement stage and beginning to experience some of the challenges in marriage they never thought would happen to them.
- To contribute to the goal of multiplying a godly culture in your church where the body of Christ actively performs its function through the institution of marriage.
- To be forward thinking and seek to pre-empt some of the devastating effects divorce and the weakening of families are having on our churches, our culture, and the world.
- To encourage seasoned couples to reach outward and inward, living out ministry for Christ in a context in which they are already daily experiencing and growing (marriage and family life).
- To purposefully contribute to the growth of the overall discipleship culture of the church.

Principles

- Provide quality training that is biblical, practical, and readily transferable to others.
- Train mentor couples to encourage and steer their trainee couples into frequent interaction and not merely talk about their marriage (giving responses and feedback only). Have them interact with each other in the presence of the mentoring couple.
 - - a. This will give the mentoring couple an actual snapshot example of how they communicate and respond to each other rather than having them merely describe it (much is lost in a detached explanation, but it’s more revealing to see the dynamic in action)
 - b. This will help reduce the potential for the interaction to be a lecture on principles or an abstract description from the mentor couple.
- Mentoring Couples should be willing to be appropriately honest and vulnerable about their mistakes and struggles along the way, as well as their own growth and development.
 - a. Younger, less experienced couples are more apt to be open and honest with someone who models the freedom to fail. The gospel is redemption and renewal, and this truth applied to marriage should offer hope in the midst of struggle and failure, not a feeling of “we’ll never make it.”

- b. But an example of genuine, tangible progress should also be offered to model that progress is desirable and normal between a growing Christian couple.

Content (*some or all may be chosen, depending on need and availability*)

- Finances
- Sex and Relational Intimacy
- Communication
- Conflict Management
- Roles – understanding, and fulfillment
- Identity in Christ and ministering together (family worship)
- Extended Family Relationships
- Goal setting in marriage

Plan

1. Counseling staff and Counseling Committee identify and invite 10 (size appropriate to your church) couples to participate as mentor couples.

Keep it small at the beginning for purity of vision and more effective training and accountability

2. Counseling staff and lay leaders provide training and materials for 4 consecutive Wednesday evenings (or some other adequate format)
 - a. Or another time during the week that is relatively convenient.
 - b. Training based on resources chosen and prepared by counseling staff and lay leaders (e.g., *Three to Get Ready*, *Sacred Marriage*, *Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, etc.)
3. Initially, begin with those who come out of premarital counseling this season.
4. After an initial “run,” invite young couples to participate in just a few ways at first:
 - a. Mentor Couples invite a specific couple to meet for the mentoring sessions.
 - b. Target 1-2 young couples’ Sunday School classes and make mentoring opportunities available.
Announce to the number of couples you are prepared to accommodate to avoid soliciting a potentially large list of participants, with far fewer couples able to provide mentoring.)
5. After a season’s worth of mentoring, mentoring couples meet back with Counseling Staff to evaluate, resource each other, and make modifications.

- 6. Allow the word to get around, allowing the initiative to speak for itself and recruit other Trainer and Trainee couples.

The Marriage Mentoring Training Program

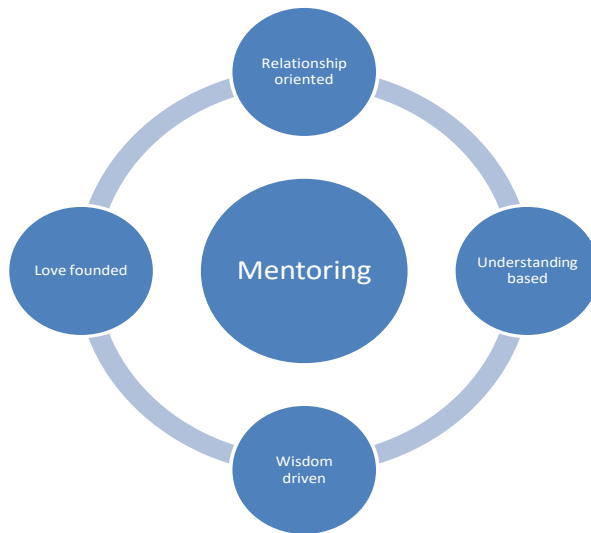
Foundational Concepts of marriage mentoring program

Relationship-oriented—Mentoring is relationship oriented.

Understanding-based—every couple must grow in understanding the nuances of marriage in order to achieve *weaving* their marriage into an enjoyable relationship.

Wisdom driven—listening to your couple and hearing where they are will give you the opportunity to draw upon the acquired wisdom of experience to offer encouragement and suggestions.

Love founded—the mentoring relationship, like the marriage relationship, is built upon love (agape).



Functional Procedures of Marriage Mentoring

Marriage Mentoring

Module	Content
<p>This column will give you the components of a mentoring program</p>	<p>This column will give you the content of each module.</p>
<p>What is marriage mentoring?</p>	<p>Marriage mentoring consists of couples experiencing a successful marriage intentionally developing a relationship with newly married couples. You could think of them as surrogate parents or coaches.</p> <p>These relationships can be “assigned” and developed through strategically placing mentors in young adult SS classes or some other informal/formal arrangement. However, in this program, we are asking couples to work with couples. The counseling office will recruit and assign couples.</p>
<p>Are you qualified to be a mentor?</p>	<p>What does it take to be a mentor? <i>First</i>, it takes a vital relationship with Jesus Christ. <i>Secondly</i>, it takes a vital relationship with one’s mate. <i>Third</i>, it takes some basic communication skills (“able to teach” concept of Timothy). <i>Fourthly</i>, it takes a commitment of time. <i>Fifthly</i>, it takes a commitment to confidentiality.</p>
<p>A Toolbox for Mentors</p>	<p>A basic Bible knowledge about Christian living and marriage issues.</p> <p>Reading of several key books—to be chosen by the Director of the Marriage Mentoring Program.</p> <p>It takes attendance at a training seminar (usually two sessions or a half-day event at which skills and tools will be discussed).</p> <p>Couples own marriages as a model (self-disclosure).</p>
<p>Common Issues</p>	<p>Lack of knowledge about biblical marriage</p> <p>Role confusion and frustration</p> <p>Sexual dissatisfaction</p> <p>Communication difficulties</p> <p>Scheduling time together</p>

	<p>Affection and attention desires</p> <p>Finances</p>
<p>A schedule for mentoring</p>	<p>Informal: set up a schedule to have a couple over for dinner (occasionally, you may go out after church or to dinner), but we prefer in-home visits. Should be once a month or 6 weeks, for one year.</p> <p>Formal: set up a time to meet to specifically to talk about marriage or to do a workbook study on marriage (but be sure to allow for informal exchange if you choose this approach).</p> <p>Mentors and mentorees of the same sex should meet periodically – could be over lunch, playing golf or tennis, or some other activity with an occasion to talk. You get a read on the marriage here that you may not get in couple times.</p> <p>Request that at least twice in the year, the mentorees invite the mentor couple to their abode for a meal and evening together.</p>