

pre-marriage mentoring leaderguide

CEDARCREEKCHURCH

Welcome

We are so grateful that you have chosen to serve as a vital part of our DreamTeam. Thank you for partnering with us to make a difference by loving others the way Christ loved us. We find that when we set out to do that, it is our hearts that grow the most, so we can't wait to hear what God does through your willingness to serve him.

This handbook is designed to provide information that is applicable to all pre-marriage mentoring.

On Mission

The DreamTeam is a group of incredible people on mission to show every guest they matter by living out their God-given purpose to make an eternal difference.

MISSION STATEMENT:

We exist to introduce people to Jesus and the life-changing adventure with him.

Dreaming Together

We are a team of people working and dreaming about the mission God has for us. Every single weekend, the DreamTeam understands that we are in the business of introducing people to Jesus and the life-changing adventure with him. That's what it means to make an eternal difference. It's all about God - what he is doing around and through all of us to reach those who are far from him, and to draw each of us toward loving others the way Christ loved us.

No Matter the Role

We understand that seemingly insignificant acts in the hands of an all-powerful God create eternal moments that change people's lives.

Privileged to Serve

We view the opportunity to serve our guests on the weekend as a “Get To” experience and not a “Have To” experience. We understand that we’re here to accomplish something bigger than ourselves and it’s a privilege to serve on this team. We’re honored and thankful to God for choosing us.

On a Journey and Helping Others

The ultimate role of the DreamTeam is to love others the way Christ loved us, helping them to take a next step in their spiritual journey.

To help someone else **KNOW GOD**

To help someone else **FIND FREEDOM**

To help someone else **DISCOVER PURPOSE**

To help someone else **MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

Becoming a Part of the DreamTeam

Is an honor because we get to serve God in the mission he has for our church and the communities we serve.

To equip every member of the team and insure the DreamTeam is the best fit, we require DreamTeam members to take these steps before serving:

- 1 Complete GrowthTrack
- 2 Complete application
- 3 Complete Group Leader Training
- 4 Participate in interview
- 5 Complete Group Leader Agreement
- 6 Complete Confidentiality Agreement
- 7 Complete Missional Membership

We gather to dream & celebrate:

DreamTeam Launch

At the beginning of each ministry year, we gather for a night filled with vision, inspiration, and worship. As a DreamTeam member, we ask that you join us to prayerfully and humbly trust God to accomplish great things in the upcoming ministry year.

DreamTeam Celebration

Once a year, just before spring, we throw a party for our amazing DreamTeam. It is a night filled with celebration as we honor our team members for the ways they are making a difference by living out their purpose.

Our Values

G

GOD'S HEART

We want every guest to know that they matter to God and they matter to us.

U

UPBEAT

We create a fun and positive environment to make an amazing first impression and for the team to serve.

E

EXCELLENCE

We pay attention to details because it shows our guests we care.

S

SEIZE WOW OPPORTUNITIES

We are always looking for ways to make every guest's experience something they can't wait to share with others.

T

TAKE THE NEXT STEPS

We want every interaction to point guests to their next step on the spiritual journey.

Know God
Find Freedom
Discover Purpose
Make a Difference

Why Pre-Marriage Mentoring?

Think about when you learned to drive; you endured a written assessment, hours of driving with an experienced adult, and a maneuverability test. All of that was necessary because bad things happen if we allow someone to drive without first learning critical skills. The reality is that critical skills are beneficial in many areas of life, including marriage.

Many engaged couples are apprehensive about marriage, yet are more consumed with planning a 30-minute ceremony and 3-hour reception than with planning steps toward a healthy marriage. The best time to help couples develop a healthy marriage, one with God at the center of their lives and home, is before they are married—before they start to “drive on the streets.” Pre-Marriage Mentoring (PMM) can begin developing the habits that will serve their marriage well for years to come!

What is Pre-Marriage Mentoring?

PMM exists to guide engaged couples toward a path of connection in their marriage, helping them to: connect with each other, learning to communicate and work through difficulties; connect with our church body, as relationships and community lead to the full life God intends for us; and connect with God, as they begin a journey of honoring him with their marriage and following his will for their lives.

At CedarCreek, we use *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts* (SYMBIS) by Les and Leslie Parrot as our curriculum. It includes an online assessment, a book, and individual workbooks for the man and woman. SYMBIS helps couples:

- Uncover the most important misbeliefs of marriage
- Learn how to communicate with greater understanding
- Discover strategies for reducing and resolving conflict
- Master the skills of money management
- Get their sex life off to a great start
- Understand the three essential ingredients to lasting love
- Discover the importance of becoming soul mates....and more

An additional resource, *Saving Your Second Marriage Before It Starts* (also by the Parrots), is used for mentoring couples who are preparing for a marriage that is not their first. This is very similar to SYMBIS, but contains nuances important to these different circumstances.

Who Supports Pre-Marriage Mentoring Leaders?

At CedarCreek, when three or more gather to connect and grow, they are a Group. This means that whenever you are assigned an engaged couple to mentor, the four of you will be a Group for the duration of the mentoring, and you will be the Pre-Marriage Mentoring Leaders of

that Group. You will be supported by another couple from your Campus, the Pre-Marriage Mentoring Coaches.

Your PMM Coaches are:

Their phone numbers are:

Their email addresses are:

Your PMM Coaches will be the ones pairing you with the engaged couples as your mentoring assignments. As a pairing occurs, your PMM Coaches will provide you with the couple's names and contact information, along with a copy of their Wedding Application* and their Officiating Pastor—Initial Meeting Summary*. You can be certain that your PMM Coaches will take good care of you by praying for you regularly, troubleshooting with you if things get challenging, and providing ongoing training and support.

Preparing for Your First Pre-Marriage Mentoring Session

Principles to help you mentor with confidence:

- 1 Pray first.** By keeping God at the center of your own hearts and marriage, you will be more equipped to serve. In addition, your prayers for the couples you mentor will make an eternal difference!
- 2 Be yourselves!** God has created you with a purpose: to make a difference through Pre-Marriage Mentoring.
- 3 Keep it casual.** Your home is the recommended meeting location, since conversation around a kitchen or dining room table provides privacy and comfort. Reduce stress by not feeling pressured to serve food, etc.

- 4 Prepare.** Be familiar with the materials and assignments. Thoroughly read the book and the workbook lesson for that week prior to meeting with the couple. As a couple, agree on what is important in each chapter and decide who will lead each topic so that you are on the same page.
- 5 Don't feel like you need to have all the right answers.** If you are uncomfortable or unsure answering any questions, let the couple know you'll find out and get back to them. No one has all the answers all the time. Reach out to your PMM Coaches for assistance.
- 6 Avoid the pressure to iron out all the "red flags."** The couple you mentor may have major areas of concern in their lives and relationship. Make yourselves a little vulnerable and share from your own marriage what you learned or wish you'd learned, but discuss ahead of time what is off limits to bring up. Don't harm your own marriage. If red flags don't get resolved with relative ease, call your PMM Coaches. They will help problem solve and, if needed, will confer with one of the pastors from your Campus. The couple may need to meet with the officiating pastor, or possibly see a counselor. Remember that you are not counselors and are not expected to resolve or fix their issues.

Practical Steps for Leading Your First Pre-Marriage Mentoring Session

Before the session

- 1** Receive your PMM assignment. Your PMM Coaches will assign the engaged couple to you.
- 2** Contact the engaged couple. Do this as soon as possible. Schedule your first session. Consider using PMM Welcome Email Template* as a communication template. This template does not include specific information on the SYMBIS materials they will be using. You may choose to add that information.
- 3** Understand the goals for the first session:
 - | To begin developing a relationship with the couple (to get acquainted)
 - | To learn their history: How has their relationship reached this point?
 - | To give them an overview of the course and the requirements
 - | To set up a schedule for meeting with them

At the session

- 1** Introduce yourselves. Spend a few minutes in social chatter (more will naturally occur as weeks move along). Share about your history at CedarCreek, your jobs, your family, your marriage, things you enjoy doing separately and as a couple—anything to break the ice and possibly find some common interests. They will likely be nervous, so try to help them relax.

- 2** Encourage the couple. Commend them for meeting with you and challenge them to make a commitment to these mentoring sessions. Rather than doing this to fulfill a requirement, recommend they do it to evaluate their present relationship and to try to lay the best foundation possible for their marriage.
- 3** Get to know the couple. Help them talk about themselves by using the PMM Get Acquainted—1st Session* questions. Jot down notes for your own reference as you go. Make note of any “red flags” that you have—anything that has the potential to erupt with the couple after the wedding. Don’t launch into these at this meeting. Save it for the appropriate sessions. Just continue to build trust. Share with the couple that their assessment results are confidential, shared only within this Group time. This will also help to build trust.
- 4** Explain the resources you will use. You will have information from their application and the initial pastor’s interview to help you determine which books the engaged couple needs to buy.

 - BOOKS:** They will need the book *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts* by Les and Leslie Parrott, 2015 copyright (aqua SYMBIS special edition label on the cover). It is available in hardcover, Kindle, and audio (read by the authors) versions. Only one hardcover book needs to be brought to the mentoring sessions, although we recommend they each have their own copy.

If they have been married before, they may need *Saving Your Second Marriage Before It Starts*, which also has an audiobook available. It is the same book as the original, but has two extra chapters to address issues resulting from prior marriages (“Are you ready to remarry?” and “Blending Families”). Again, it’s the 2015 copyright edition with the aqua SYMBIS special edition label on the cover.

WORKBOOKS: They will each need their own workbook. There is a separate one for men and women. Be sure they buy the ones that correspond to the book you will be using (the book for a first marriage or the book for a second marriage) and that it’s the newest edition. At specific points in the book, it gives instructions to go to the workbook and do exercise # _____. The audiobook does this as well, so if the couple is listening to the book together, they would stop the recording when directed and each go to their individual workbooks to do the exercise separately, then return to listening to the book.

SYMBIS Assessment: If you haven’t done so prior to the first meeting, you will email them an invitation to complete this online assessment through your SYMBIS Facilitator Dashboard. They will complete the assessment on their own—it will take them approximately 35 minutes. As their PMM Leaders, you will receive their results and discuss those results throughout the course of the mentoring. (IMPORTANT: Only distribute the page being discussed.

Do not give out advanced pages; retain the remaining pages of the report to discuss together.) At the end of the mentoring, they will have the entire report to keep. Again, their results will be kept confidential.

- 5** Explain the mentoring process. At each session, you will discuss pertinent points throughout the chapter, some areas of the workbook exercises, and if time allows, some of the questions at the end of each chapter. You will also share the assessment pages corresponding to the chapter for that session, in order to better understand how the principles in the book apply specifically to the couple and their relationship. By the end of the mentoring process, they will have received their entire report.
- 6** Work hard and have fun. This course needs a high degree of effort from them, but there will also be plenty of fun along the way!
- 7** Schedule your sessions. Decide on tentative dates to meet that will work for everyone. Each session will take 1.5-2 hours. Stress the importance of making these mentoring sessions a priority. You will need three copies of the schedule (either SYMBIS Assignment Schedule—1st Marriage Book* or SYMBIS Assignment Schedule—2nd Marriage Book*, depending on which book you are using), which serves as a session scheduler and also as an assignment sheet. You get one copy of the schedule—the other two go the couple so they'll each have their own.

- 8 **Explain the homework.** Each time you meet, use the schedule to clarify the materials that need to be read and the exercises that need to be completed before the next time you connect.
- 9 **Pray.** One of the best gifts you can give the engaged couple is prayer. Invite God to work in each of your relationships throughout the mentoring process.
- 10 After the session, finish the “Get Acquainted—Summary” at the end of the PMM Get Acquainted—1st Session*. This is for your information only. It will help you prepare for the weeks ahead.
- 11 Send the SYMBIS Assessment invitation via your Facilitator Dashboard.

Leading Subsequent Sessions

- 1 Pray first. It may be helpful to decide beforehand which Mentoring Leader is going to do this.
- 2 Ask the couple, “What did you learn about each other?” Helping the couple have open dialogue is more important than covering all the materials with you.
- 3 Review highlights of the assigned chapter. Use these approaches:
Questioning: What did you find new or interesting in this chapter? What page was it on?

SYMBIS Assessment: Review the page currently under discussion. (REMEMBER: Only distribute the page being discussed. Do not give out advanced pages; retain the remaining pages of the report to discuss together.) Thoroughly process the information and ask the questions on each page. Allow the couple to react to the information presented.

Select review questions at the end of the chapter. (The couple does not need to do these in advance.)

Select workbook exercises. (The couple should do these before meeting with you and should have already compared their answers.)

- 4 Confirm the next meeting date and homework assignment.
- 5 Close in prayer.
- 6 Post attendance (at some point during the week).

Special Instructions!

Chapter Two: **“Can You Identify Your Love Style”**

Exercise #7 in the workbook is about sexual intimacy. If the couple struggles with sexual purity, they may not want to compare answers on this exercise before meeting with you. If they would like, you can take ten minutes and meet separately about this exercise (guys in one room, gals in another) before they compare their workbooks on this exercise. It’s up to you how to best handle this one with your couple. Though very important, this is only one part of the chapter—you are not meant to spend the whole evening on it alone.

Final Session

1 CELEBRATE!

Commend them for their hard work and their commitment to developing a marriage relationship that is all God wants it to be!

2 CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

Prior to the last session, print a color copy of the PMM Certificate of Completion* on high quality paper (your PMM Coaches can help with this; we recommend printing a few at a time so that you have extras in stock). Fill it out, sign it, and have your Campus Pastor or the officiating pastor (if it is someone different) sign it. Present it to the couple at the last session.

3 COUPLE'S EVALUATION

We would love the couple's feedback on their PMM experience. Depending on the couple, you can either explain that you will email them a link to an online evaluation or you may want to take a few minutes and have them fill out the evaluation as part of your final session together. When you send the link to them, you can use the link from the page with the survey at My.CedarCreek.tv—the PMM Engaged Couple's Program Evaluation*.

4 HELPS AND RESOURCES SHEET

You can print the PMM Helps and Resources* to give your couple at the last session or email them the link when you send them the Couple's Evaluation link

and info. It includes a link to a list of CedarCreek counseling referrals. Encourage your couple to get some help if they experience a breakdown in communication or sense issues beginning to surface. The counseling referral list can also be found at My.CedarCreek.tv.

5 FINAL REPORT

Complete the PMM Leaders' Final Report*. This addresses your mentoring experience with the couple and their readiness for marriage. This webform routes to the officiating pastor and your PMM Coaches, and sends copies for yourselves.

All resources marked with an asterisk* can be found after logging in to your My.CedarCreek.tv login on the Groups page.

Thank you.

Leaders, the time, energy, and care you pour into Pre-Marriage Mentoring greatly increases their hope for a marriage that lasts and honors God. You are making a difference. You matter!