

I WANT TO START TOMORROW, WHERE DO I BEGIN?

There are different paths depending on your parish situation

1. If you have a Marriage Prep Coordinator or a good prospect for one then you send them to be trained in Witness to Love. You put an announcement in the bulletin introducing them and their role, you have them introduce themselves at all the Masses and you update your marriage guidelines on your website. The next couple to come through for marriage prep will use this new model. All current couples in the process do not have their process changed **HOWEVER** you can ask them to find a “sponsor” couple and have a similar Witness to Love model that continues after the wedding more in the style of marriage enrichment.
2. If you are new to a parish and do not have a marriage prep coordinator or even a potential one then for the first year you can combine the roles and even the meetings for Marriage prep coordinator and clergy. You can then choose one of the mentor couples who comes through and you can see they would be a great fit. You send them to be trained and it is great because you know that they know the process and the benefits of it.
3. If you already have mentor couples in your parish you can have one couple be the “team leader” and then assign certain couples to follow up with engaged couples and their mentors after the wedding and then other couples to meet with engaged couples and their mentors two times before the wedding just like the normal Witness to Love process.
4. If you are worried about the ability of couples in your parish to be mentors or you find that due to location dynamics that your parish is too disconnected or large you can have potential mentor couples that you have selected on your church website. Ideally these would be a diverse group of mentors and engaged couples could choose from these if they are not part of the parish or able to find a mentor from among their married friends.

GETTING AN ENGAGED COUPLE STARTED

The “Witness of Love” model typically proceeds along the following progression:

Initial Meeting with the Priest/Deacon:

Welcome the engaged couple

Explore their motives for marriage

Assess their level of faith

Establish their “freedom to marry”

Present an overview of the marriage preparation process

Arrange for them to complete an inventory (e.g. PREPARE)

Inform them of the process of selection of a mentor couple

The basic guidelines for choosing a mentor couple:

1. mentor should be married 5 years or more
2. active in the Church
3. have a marriage the engaged couple admires
4. and preferably go to the same church as the engaged couples.

Review of Inventory by Marriage Prep Coordinator and Coaching of Mentors

Reviews the results of the pre-marital inventory

Decides which issues and exercises the engaged couple will need to complete

Design “Scavenger Hunt” of activities to be completed by both the engaged and mentor couples

Helps to secure the cooperation of the mentor couple that has been chosen

Establish a meeting with both the engaged and mentor couples

Meeting with MPC, engaged and mentor couples.

The MPC invites the engaged couple into their home to briefly review the results of the pre-marital inventory

The mentor couple arrives a little later and receives the materials and instructions from the MPC for the follow-up sessions and Scavenger Hunt



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A CHEAT SHEET FOR YOUR FIRST MEETING

Initial Meeting with the Marriage Prep Coordinator, Engaged Couple and Mentor Couple

- Ice-Breaker: welcome, let them know that we just covered the questionnaire with the engaged couple (making sure that everyone knows it is OK to laugh) Conversation with mentor couple, engaged couples, and marriage prep-coordinator questions:
- How did you couples meet? How long have you known each other
- To engaged couple: Tell us why you choose this particular couple to mentor you? What were the traits and characteristics that caught your attention?
- To mentor couple: Can you share with us a little bit about your initial thoughts on this process and/or the couple that has asked you to walk with them in the formation for marriage? How is this process similar or different from your own marriage preparation?
- Introducing Witness to Love and Role of Marriage Preparation Coordinator
- Explain the vision for this way of preparing for marriage.
- What Coordinator and Parish will be providing during this period.
- What will the mentor be providing for the engaged couple?
- Providing a secure place (relationship) through mentors for couples during difficult times
- Ensuring a connectedness to parish and understanding the need/value for community
- A lifeline to the Church and to God.
- The process (nuts and bolts) of building up the relationship:
- Scavenger Hunt - includes everything that will be done.
- How the mentors will use the questionnaire and quickly review a copy with them (Couples Report only not full facilitator's report)
- Date nights - describe
- Answer Mentor's question of "what exactly do I do?"
- Explain how all the books are just tools to help mentor couple understand how to share their marriage and do it in a way that strengthens their own marriage as well.
- Distribute Trade Book focusing on how to share marriage.
- Email Summary of key points to them after you meet.



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First meeting cont.

- Workbook and 6 Meeting Overview:
- Remember that this is basically an outline of the conversations for the 6 meetings that will take place. It is here that mentors will find the suggestions of how to share their marriage.
- Explain how to prepare for each meeting.
- Use Chapter 3 in workbook as model chapter for first meeting
- Remember to highlight need for prayer in each meeting
- Explain design of charts and scales in workbook
- Explain extremes (ex. turned inwards to smothering)
- Discerning which virtue is most important and needs to be focused on.
- Help mentor couple see the value in preparing a personal story of their own for each meeting. Understanding most effective ways of sharing. Not so much about just talking but about sharing.
- Explain significance of term “beloved”
- Reinforce essential element or value of having a mentor couples and the benefits of relationships and accountability. Unique about WTL is that there will always be at least one of the four desire to fulfill commitments of mentoring process.
- Their 6 meetings should each last no longer than an hour and a half.
- Any questions that were not answered?
- Coordinator provides timeline based on their requested wedding date.
- Closing prayer
- Guys are invited to leave and discuss their double date and set a date and time for it.



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On-going sessions between engaged and mentor couples

- On-going sessions between engaged and mentor couples
- The two couples decide on a schedule of meetings and the activities outlined in the Scavenger Hunt
- The meetings follow the outline for the sessions presented in the “Witness to Love: Couple’s Guide” along with the materials that correspond to the strength and growth areas identified in the pre-marital Inventory.
- Theology meeting with Priest/Deacon
- Prior to the 5th session with the mentor couple, the engaged couple will have attended the “Theology Day” provided by the Diocese with the instructions to return with at least 5 questions they would like answered in more depth.
- The mentor couple would then arrange for a meeting in their home with the priest/deacon, the engaged couple and the mentor couple to explore the answers to the questions that the engaged couple raised.
- The purpose of this meeting is two-fold: 1) to deepen the understanding of the Church’s theology of marriage for the engaged couple and 2) to reawaken an appreciation for the Church’s understanding of marriage for the mentor couple.
- Follow-up Meetings:
- After the wedding, the newly married couple and the engaged couple are urged to continue meeting at least once every two months to continue their discussions of marriage and marital spirituality (mystagogia).
- The engaged couple is encouraged to turn to their mentor couple whenever the need arises to address any struggles or disagreements they may have.
- The relationship between the couples can continue indefinitely.



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