

Why pre-engagement counseling?

Most people agree that some form of pre-marital counseling is valuable. Our approach of using pre-engagement counseling to prepare couples for marriage is not about a difference in content; it's about strategic timing. It is our conviction that pre-engagement counseling has a number of advantages over pre-marriage counseling. First, since choosing a mate is one of the most important decisions any of us will ever make, it is wise to prepare yourself for that decision as much as possible. Pre-engagement counseling keeps all the options on the table. Second, it is far easier to consider the strengths and flaws of a relationship and actually be able to do something about them in the pre-engagement period than during engagement. If issues are unearthed in the process that the couple needs time to work through, there's no countdown to a wedding day going in the background. The couple can take the time they need without undue pressure from well-meaning family and friends. Third, pre-engagement counseling allows the couple a period of time before the life altering decision of matrimony to consider realistically, with an experienced couple, how equipped they are to meet the demands of married life. Our material for pre-engagement counseling is called A Guide to Decide.

The goals for this course are twofold:

1. To help couples decide whether they are ready to engage in a life-long, God-honoring marriage with each other.
2. To lay a foundation for a lasting covenant, a joyful life, and fruitful partnership.

These goals help couples consider more than simply how they feel for one another, or whether they are capable of being married for life. It is the aim of this counseling, rather, to set a standard that includes the powerful connection of two lives spent serving, loving, kingdom-building, giving, and being holy together. We are not interested in producing marriages that simply continue to exist, but rather in producing happy and whole marriages that grow and develop over a lifetime.

A brief table of contents is listed below:

- Session 1 - Getting Acquainted (with your guiding couple)
- Session 2 - Covenant: The Language of Fidelity
- Session 3 - Leaving Home: Looking Back, Looking Forward
- Session 4 - Agape Love: The Language of Service
- Session 5 - Communication: The Language of Friendship
- Session 6 - Sexual Love: The Language of Touch
- Session 7 - Conflict Resolution: The Language of Peace
- Session 8 - Role Expectations and Decision Making
- Session 9 - Mastering Money in Marriage
- Session 10 - Couples in Community

Guiding couples are an essential part of this program. Each deciding couple will be going through the Guide to Decide material with a married couple who have worked to glorify God in their marriages. Guiding couples will help deciding couples ask questions, talk through important topics, and learn to evaluate their relationships on both rational and spiritual levels. As such, guiding couples are essential to the success of this program because they do not merely offer their time free of charge, but also their lives, experiences, and advice. Deciding couples will be paired with guiding couples that will meet with them weekly (in most cases).

Getting started is not a difficult process. We strongly recommend that any couple seeking to begin Guide to Decide date exclusively for at least one year before asking to begin. Extenuating circumstances will, of course, be considered. All requests to begin Guide to Decide should be directed towards Danielle Rodriguez Clark or Austin Gage who oversee guiding couples.

Austin Gage
903-363-6165
Austin@anyfocus.org

Danielle Rodriguez Clark
214-449-6044
Danielle@anyfocus.org

Hannah King
972-345-1293
Hannah@anyfocus.org

Guide to Decide Program Cost: \$250*

The cost includes the following:

- 2 Guide to Decide Booklets
- 2 copies of the *Married for Good* book
- Prepare and Enrich Assessment
- Taylor Johnson Temperament Analysis
- 1 Sessions with a counselor who will administer the Taylor Johnson assessment

Please make a check out to FOCUS for \$215.

The additional \$35 will be paid online to Prepare and Enrich when you register online for the assessment.

Payment may be sent to the FOCUS office at 318 N. Shiloh Road, Garland, TX 75042.

**If the cost of the Guide to Decide course will be a financial burden to you and your significant other, please talk to Danielle or Austin to make alternative arrangements.*

GETTING STARTED

The way we typically start the pre-engagement counseling process is to contact Austin Gage or Danielle Rodriguez Clark. They will evaluate the needs of you and your significant other and then assign you a guiding couple. In the mean time, please pay for your Guide to Decide materials. All payments should be made out to FOCUS and may be sent to our offices at 318 N. Shiloh Road, Garland, TX 75042.

After your guiding couple is assigned, the four of you should get together and get to know each other a little bit. Assuming everyone feels like this is a good match, you are welcome to arrange a meeting time for your sessions.

As a part of the pre-engagement process, we use two different assessments to help you get to know each other and identify areas to work through with your guiding couple. Stephanie Dix, Jamiann Worsham or Hayli Gage are our counselors that may assist you with the Taylor Johnson Assessment. One of our counselors will meet with the dating couple to administer the tests and after they are scored, and will meet with you again to go over the results. Any meetings that are not cancelled 24 hours before the meeting time will be subject to a \$15 cancellation fee. The results of your assessments will also be given to your guiding couple. The cost of these assessments are included in the cost of the course.

We recommend that you contact Hannah King directly to register for the Guide to Decide program:

Hannah King
972-345-1293
Hannah@anyfocus.org

Below is a brief description of both assessments.

Prepare and Enrich:

Prepare & Enrich is a customized couple assessment completed online that identifies a couple's strength and growth areas. It is one of the most widely used programs for premarital counseling and premarital education. It is also used for marriage counseling, marriage enrichment, and dating couples considering engagement.

The assessment helps couples explore strength and growth areas, strengthen communication skills, identify and manage major stressors, explore family of origin issues, discuss financial planning and budgeting, understand and appreciate personality differences.

Taylor Johnson Temperament Analysis (T-JTA):

The T-JTA is a widely used personality assessment for individual, marital, premarital, and family counseling. The T-JTA measures 18 dimensions of personality (9 bipolar traits) that are important components of personal adjustment and in interpersonal relationships.

The T-JTA's unique "Criss-Cross" testing feature identifies pertinent differences between couples, family members, and others in significant relationships. The T-JTA pinpoints for the counselor where to focus counseling time and attention. The T-JTA Profile is a simple yet effective counseling tool designed for use in the counseling session to increase understanding, enhance personal growth and thereby reduce conflict.