Fall 2014 Merge Leader Training
September 24, 2014

1. Three Core Watermark Marriage Ministry Assumptions
   a. Jesus is the key to relationships that glorify God
   b. Marriage was created by God and is the most unique human relationship
   c. Growth happens best in the context of community

2. Class Details & Schedule
   a. Merge Premarital Class
      i. Wednesday nights, October 1 through November 19
      ii. Merge class, 6:30-8:30, 2nd floor Children’s Building
   b. Leader dinner & meetings
      i. 5:30-6:20, 2nd floor Children’s Building
   c. Coach & Leaders
d. How do we Equip Our Couples?
   i. Teaching
   ii. Small Group Discussion
   iii. Homework

e. Schedule (page 6)

f. How we assign couples to leaders
   i. Invite Outsiders

g. Couple Demographics
3. Watermark Premarital/Newly Married Process
   a. Merge Class
      i. Purpose:

         ii. Limitations:

         1. Luke 8.4-15

   b. 2-on-2 premarital mentoring

   c. Foundation Groups

4. Five Lessons Learned in Leading Merge

    1. 

    2. 

    3. 

    4. 

    5.
5. Leading in Merge

   a. Wednesday Night Role – Leader Expectations

   b. Be a GREAT Host

   c. Night One

   d. Leading Discussion (see pages 7-12)

      i. “Danger”

   e. What about the Tough Questions/Issues?
6. What to do “Between the Wednesday’s”

   a. Best practices

   b. Miscellaneous

7. Next Steps

8. Contact Info:
   a. Beth Kaye – 214.239.8818; merge@watermark.org
   b. Scott Kedersha – 214.393.3013; skedersha@watermark.org
Session One  
*Class Overview & A Biblical View of Marriage*  
Scott Kedersha

Session Two  
*Biblical Roles in Marriage*  
Lucina and Kyle Thompson

Session Three  
*Communication & Conflict*  
Lance and Mandy Sisco

Session Four  
*Strengthening Your Relationship*  
Kristen and Scott Kedersha

Session Five  
*Finances*  
Caleb Dean

Session Six  
*Expectations and Family/In-Laws*  
Callie and Ryan Nixon

Session Seven  
*Sexual Intimacy*  
Pam and John McGee

Session Eight  
*Understanding Your Spouse*  
Kristen & Scott Kedersha
Wednesday night role:

Your primary responsibility for this portion of the class will be to attend the eight sessions, and help facilitate small group discussion among the engaged and nearly engaged couples in your group. As a small group facilitator, you can best set-up your group for success by:

• **Asking good questions (which we will provide) and good follow-up questions.** We will provide several questions around which to base discussion, but the goal will be for all couples to communicate and share, not for you to teach for 45 minutes.
  - Good questions provoke and stimulate conversation
  - Ask open ended questions, rather than yes/no questions
  - Discussion questions look for info members of the group have that the leader of the group may not have (i.e. what do you think of car debt?)
  - Help people talk to each other, not just to the leader

• **Listen well** – your role is not to talk the whole time, but to facilitate discussion and allow the couples to share and to build relationships.

• **Don’t act like your marriage is perfect** – share your own story – be vulnerable with your couples (as you feel appropriate) by sharing your own strengths and struggles as a married couple. Share stories from your engagement. Lead the way in being open and authentic with your group.

• **Prepare ahead of time** – Know what their homework is and look it over yourselves so that you are prepared to discuss.

• **Don’t be afraid to say ‘I don’t know’** – check with your coach or with Scott if you don’t know the answer to a question rather than making something up.
• **A word of caution:**
  o During Q & A sessions, please let the couples in the class ask questions before you add comments or ask your own questions. We’ve gotten consistent feedback from couples taking the class expressing frustration about mentor couples either asking all the questions, or making comments posed as questions.

• **Don’t be afraid to challenge couples**

• **Don’t be afraid to encourage your couples**
10 characteristics of great leaders:

1. Relational/Warm – (Host v. Guest) (“There you are” rather than “Here I am.”)
2. Vibrant spiritual life and know and apply God’s Word.
3. Humble
4. Available and stay in contact throughout the week
5. Encouraging
7. Good listeners. (Resist the urge to be profound)
8. Have a marriage worth imitating
9. Authentic about their own marriage and struggles
10. Can manage a group well.

Characteristics of a great group:

1. Reliance on God’s word more than personal opinions.
2. Safe
3. Authentic
4. Everyone gets to share
5. People focus on themselves
6. Encouraging
7. Members genuinely care for each other
8. No gossip and conflict is resolved
9. Everyone is engaged and working hard

How to develop a plan for the evening.

- Pick a question or 2 to start with (see leader agenda)
- Follow up from last week with any other open items.
- Be flexible and open to the Holy Spirit. Sometimes the best way to start is by asking "What resonated, what did you learn, or where were you convicted by from the teaching, your homework, discussion, etc...?"
- You probably won’t have time to go around the circle and ask each person what they wrote for each answer.

“Cross talk”

- At the beginning of the group either limit or eliminate cross talk to help individuals focus on themselves.
- As the group matures you can relax the rules and ask the group what they think or allow interactions that mature Christian friends would have with each other such as asking follow up questions, giving feedback or advice, sharing Scripture, encouraging each other,
- Remember to always stay in control of your group.
After someone shares

• Thank them for sharing, for their insight, or affirm them for growth you are seeing in that area.
• Remember that people will share a little at a time and see how you react. Don’t act shocked, or immediately start giving advice, or they will stop sharing. Instead affirm them for sharing, ask them if there is anything else, ask follow up questions.
• Ask any follow up questions you think might be helpful.

Good follow up questions

• “Where do you think God was/is in that”
• “What does that look like in your own relationship”
• “What do you think your spouse would say about the issue?”
• “What does God’s Word say about that?”
• “What do you think God wants you to do?”

Create Community

• Time outside as a group – examples: Dinner, coffees, dessert night, group picnics, events, etc.
• Time outside individually - examples: Phone calls, coffee, meals, emails.
• The expectation is that you will try to create a sense of community and clarify the Gospel with each person in the group.

Miscellaneous Thoughts

• Don’t assume any previous Biblical knowledge. Don’t use churchy language.
• Don’t take sides. Make sure to hear both stories. (Proverbs 18:17)
• Always assume there is more to the story.
• Observe non verbal as much as the verbal. Feel free to ask why someone seemed uncomfortable, angry, disengaged.
• If someone isn't doing their homework, showing up, or engaging in the process address it.


**Pastoral Wisdom**

**Be available but not overly so**

- Jesus did talk about leaving the 99 to find the one, but you cannot sacrifice yourself or your marriage to care for others.
- Being overly available may not be good for the couple. Sometimes praying with them and seeing them next week will force them to work on the issues themselves.

**Role of Scripture**

- Do you really believe 2 Tim 3:16, Heb 4:12?
- Anchor your answer and advice in scripture.
- Ask your participants which Scriptures informed their comments. This is a great chance to review Scripture covered previously in lessons.
- Give the group or individual an assignment to look up passages related to the issue.
- Don’t be afraid to say you don’t know and come back next week with relevant passages.

**Your own marriage**

- Make sure you are doing the homework yourselves each week and working on your own marriage.
- Continue to invest in your own marriage. Don’t confuse talking with your spouse about others with investing in your own marriage.
- Share the successes of your marriage. They need healthy models.
- Share the failures of your marriage. They need models of authenticity, repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation.
- If you are struggling in your own marriage, let leadership know.
- Be aware of what your leadership style conveys about your marriage. No one should dominate and no one should be checked out. Ask for and value the opinion of your spouse. Talk each night about how you think you did as a team.
**Opposite Sex relationships**

- As a leader never counsel someone alone of the opposite sex. If dialoguing by email, copy your spouse on the exchange.
- Be alert for any connections between group members of the opposite sex.

**When to involve Merge leadership**

- We trust you and your ability to lead and shepherd your group (2 Peter 1:3). You do not need to ask for permission or fill in leadership with every detail of your group.
- Your coach will be your first point of contact
- Feel free to ask for help or wisdom on a situation at any point. Leadership wants you succeed and grow as a leader. You are not a hassle.
- Inform leadership when there has been: physical abuse, outbursts of anger, threats of suicide, or unresolved conflict in the group.

**Frameworks to think about pastoral care**

And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all - 1 Thessalonians 5:14

- There is a time to admonish, encourage, and help. Always be patient.
- Grace+Truth+Time=Change

Use the Gospel and example of Christ every time you can to explain or call to action. Examples:

- “You can be honest because God already knows and accepts you.”
- “You can forgive because God has forgiven you and commanded you to forgive the way He has (completely, without retribution, etc.)
- “You can love regardless of the actions of your boyfriend/girlfriend because God loves you in spite of not because of your actions.”