WELS Marriage Enrichment Weekends

Value
A WELS Marriage Enrichment & Get-Away Weekend teaches the gospel to members and non-members and helps couples apply the gospel to their marriages. Marriage is under attack but a Christian spouse’s grace-fueled faith seeks specific application of God-given principles to strengthen his or her marriage. Believers then witness to the unchurched by their marriage. God is glorified. Families, communities and congregations are strengthened.

(Marriage-building Church is another ministry of the WELS CAD to engage WELS members in a discussion on becoming a marriage-building church. Ask for more information.)

Vision
WELS Marriage Enrichment Weekends equip pastors to lead a “catalyst” marriage building event in their congregations. Members who experience the WELS Marriage Enrichment Weekend are likely to help develop ministry that will help their church be a “marriage building” church.

Philosophy
The WELS CAD will lead WELS Marriage Enrichment Weekend events to build the marriages of members, non-members and pastors. This event will also equip pastors with high quality, Lutheran, trustworthy resources to help them provide an annual marriage enrichment events for the flocks they serve.

Purpose
WELS Marriage Enrichment weekends have a dual purpose:

1) to serve members and non-members with gospel motivated strength for glorifying God in marriage and

2) to equip pastors with resources to use in their parishes. Pastors who attend WELS Marriage Enrichment Weekends receive the materials (leader’s notes, participant booklets, PowerPoint teaching slides) for use in their own congregations. They will have learned and practiced five gospel-centered, relevant and marriage building sessions. They can use them any way they choose: from “date nights” once a month that begin at church and offer childcare during the couples’ date time, to pre-marriage counseling, to conducting an entire weekend event for their church. Congregations may consider this continuing education and pay for the pastor and his
wife to attend for personal benefit and for on-the-job training for marriage ministry in their church.

Methodology

WELS Adult Discipleship will develop a different WELS Marriage Enrichment weekend annually. Teaching methodology includes:

- **A gospel focus** for biblical learning. Christian publishers make available a wide variety of marriage ministry resources; most of them are biblical but few are gospel-motivated. Fewer still have a Lutheran emphasis on justification and faith fueled by the means of grace.

- **Active learning**: lecture is minimal. Participating couples talk to each other and listen to each other. The teacher utilizes tactics for instruction that maximize these opportunities.

- **Pleasant pace**: learner-driven not content-driven. Pastor’s conference may pack the agenda in the interest of good stewardship. WELS Marriage Enrichment Weekends provide plenty of down time for couples to reflect on and practice what they are learning.

- **Task-oriented**: groups of 2-3 couples will solve problems and apply scripture. Newlyweds learn from oldy-weds; couples learn from each other.

- **Privacy** is not the same as confidentiality. Privacy will be respected; couples will have time and space for necessary private conversation. Learners learn best when they feel safe.

- **Relevant**: Thousands of couples have told us about the kinds things for which they want biblical instruction. For example, physical intimacy. The setting of all married people allows for instruction and discussion of sex and sexuality that is fun, frank and God-pleasing. We are not ashamed to discuss that which God was not ashamed to create.

Venue

We strive for a memorable destination; a place conducive to romance and memories. We could teach in the church fellowship hall, but learners would lose the “get-away” sense that shows the importance of marriage. Marriage is worth time and money. Pastors might do well to seek venues by asking their wives and other women in the congregation, “Where within a two-hour drive from here would you like to go with your husband on a get-away weekend?”

This event is truly a get-away. We build into it time to focus on marriage and each other, free from distractions. Some couples will object, “We can’t afford it.” Marriage counseling is over $100/hour. That new TV was $1000. Childcare will be an issue for some; but advance planning can help most.

The meeting room needs to be large enough to accommodate an inefficient arrangement: crescent rounds of 6 with the open end facing the screen which is positioned on the long wall of the room. It’s critical that you understand this because most hotel group sales/banquet set up
people don’t. They will likely talk about “capacity” for a room, but they mean something other than what we mean. The kind of learning we do requires a very inefficient room set-up.

Hotels and conferences centers require contracts. These are legal documents. We have an administrative assistant to negotiate contracts, see to proper communication with the venue, payments, etc.

Typical schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Schedule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friday</strong></td>
<td>Session 1, 8 – 9 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saturday</strong></td>
<td>Breakfast (coffee/tea service in meeting room through am)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Session 2-3, 9 – 11:30 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lunch, noon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Session 4, 1-2:30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Date night – long afternoon and a “take-along” for Sat. date night (on their own)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sunday</strong></td>
<td>Breakfast (coffee/tea service in meeting room through am)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Session 5, 9 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worship, 10 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Checkout, 11 am</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher

Randy Hunter has been actively researching marriage and writing, publishing and leading marriage enrichment events for 20 of his 30 years of parish ministry. He employs a “marriage lab” in a church to test his teaching. He has taught and trained pastors in all 12 districts and Canada and world mission fields. He combines his expertise in adult education with his passion for God-honoring marriage to create active, thoughtfully crafted learning experiences each year.

Costs

Historically, the WELS Commission on Adult Discipleship has funded the cost of developing materials and expenses to conduct 6-10 teaching/training events/year. Pastor Hunter borrows AV equipment from a local church or from the church he serves to save significant rental costs.

Participants cover the costs of the lodging, meals, and some incidental expenses. WELS CAD will enable registration and payment through www.wels.net.

Some churches budget an amount to subsidize couples who attend. Churches are encouraged to pay for the pastor and his wife to attend; this is continuing education for him, good for his family, and brings a ministry resource home to their congregation.
Publicity

Dates and venues should be chosen 9 months to a year in advance; the sooner the better. WELS CAD will supply ppt slides, posters, brochures, sample newsletter announcements, etc. Don’t forget the community. Unchurched people want strong marriages, too, and you can use this event to teach them the gospel. Your event will be posted at: www.wels.net/adult-discipleship

What do I do now?

1. Choose a weekend in the next year (or even two years in advance) and contact the teacher and the event planner with one email. The teacher is Randy Hunter, randy.hunter@st-andrew-online.org. If you can, suggest 1 or 2 options for venues (see “Venues” section). Tammy will contact venues, choose one and negotiate a contract.

2. We will reply with confirmation of dates and venue options. After that, publicity and registration information will be set up on wels.net.

3. We will promote via wels.net, WELS Facebook, direct emails to pastors, etc. We would ask your help in promoting at circuit, conference and district gatherings.

Randy Hunter
WELS Commission on Adult Discipleship
randy.hunter@st-andrew-online.org
608-831-8540 (o)
608-354-5856 (c)