

# Building Homes of Hope and Wholeness

Family Ministries Training Program  
for Local Church Leaders

North American Division Edition

## LEADER'S GUIDE



- A Firm Foundation
- Relationship & Marriage
- Parenting
- Sexuality
- Aging Gracefully
- Family Ministries at the Local Church



# **BUILDING HOMES OF HOPE AND WHOLENESS**

## **FAMILY MINISTRIES TRAINING PROGRAM FOR LOCAL CHURCH LEADERS**

### **LEADER'S GUIDE**

**Family Ministries Department  
North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church**

#### **Mission Statement**

Our mission of evangelism is to provide resources, training, and networking opportunities that will instill hope and bring wholeness to families within the territory of the North American Division.

#### **Vision Statement**

Reaching Families for Eternity

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North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

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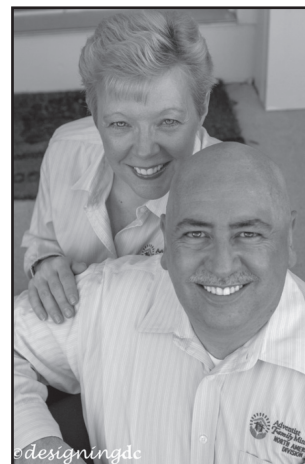
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# Foreword

Dear Family Ministry Leaders,

We are delighted that you have been chosen by God to lead out in this important ministry in your local congregation. The fact that you are reading this is a testament to your desire to be faithful to His call.

The purpose of Family Ministries is to support families in a growing, joyful, and loving relationship with Jesus Christ. Our departmental mission statement reads, “Our mission of evangelism is to provide resources, training, and networking opportunities that will instill hope and bring wholeness to families within the territory of the North American Division.” You will notice that each chapter in this resource guide will introduce various elements needed to build homes of hope and wholeness, in fulfillment of that mission.



In addition, our departmental vision statement is, “Reaching Families for Eternity” and indeed that is also our desire — that we endeavor to have all our family members in heaven with us and that also includes our church family. Your dedication to fulfilling this vision statement will have a lasting impact on families as you realize that evangelism, at its best, occurs within the context of family.

So, where do you begin as you start to focus on family ministries? Look at this counsel: “Our work for Christ is to begin with the family, in the home... There is no missionary field more important than this” (White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 35). Yes, all too often we think that we must go to a faraway land to be a missionary when the truth is that the starting point is in the home.

In Jesus’ great and final commission, He directed His followers: “Go and make disciples...” (Matthew 28:19). God intended the family to be a natural setting for carrying out this directive. “As workers for God, our work is to begin with those nearest. It is to begin in our own home. There is no more important missionary field than this” (White, *Child Guidance*, p. 476).

Again, thank you for your active commitment to strengthen the family ties within your local congregation and community. May God be with you as you fulfill this sacred calling.

Yours because of Him,

Drs. Claudio & Pamela Consuegra

Family Ministries Directors

North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

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# How to Use This Resource

The purpose of this resource is to train Family Ministries leaders of local churches. All too often we are asked to undertake a ministry that is new to us and further education and guidance is needed. This tool will help you to provide training so local church leaders will have a greater understanding of family issues and dynamics.

This resource was developed as a direct response to surveys conducted among the Family Ministries leadership team. This training resource, as requested, meets the following criteria:

- One-day Training
- Interactive
- Concise
- Practical
- Certificate Issued Upon Completion

**One-day-Training** — You will notice that there are six modules in this guide. Each modules should take approximately one hour to present (including the group activities). So, it is very doable to schedule one day for this training and still allow time for short breaks between each session as well as a lunch break.

**Interactive** — A key to maximizing this resource is to utilize all the group discussion and activities that are contained within. This is to be an interactive training tool and much of the learning will take place as your group engages in these activities. We have attempted to keep the information in each modules concise so you should have plenty of time for group interaction. So, don't skip the activities and discussion.

**Concise** — This resource is a basic introduction that touches the key points needed to understand healthy family dynamics and is not meant to be an exhaustive resource. Please look at it as the beginning point as you start leading your church in this very important ministry.

**Practical** — Once you have completed the one-day training, you can use each topic as a stand-alone seminar in your own church. We hope this encourages you to get started teaching the church members and the people in your communities.

**Certificate of Completion** — At the close of the training, each participant will receive a certificate. All you need to do is use the certificate provided on the resource USB drive provided with this guide, fill in the participant name and date and add your signature as the presenter.

Remember, you are the resource person for the church when it comes to family ministries so the better equipped you are, the better you will be able to minister to those in your conference, congregation and community. As stated earlier, this tool is only the beginning, therefore, it is our prayer that each director will continue the journey of learning and take advantage of the additional resources that are listed to expand understanding of each topic. May God bless you as you go forth to follow His call!



# A Word for the Trainer/Leader

We are delighted you are leading the training of local church Family Ministries leaders. The work that you do in your field may be extensive and your contact with the local church very limited, so training local church leaders is crucial in order for them to have an ongoing ministry to the families in their church and community.

While we are providing some suggested responses, we suggest you encourage the participants to respond and provide their own ideas and allow for flexibility as various groups will come up with different answers. Do not allow the possible or suggested responses we provide here to limit you as they are only given as samples to help if group discussion is slow or minimal.

Since you are the trainer/leader, we are providing you with this additional guide to help you be as prepared to lead your group as possible. We encourage you to make good use of this resource by making it:

- **Personal** — As the instructor for this course, we encourage you to make it personal. Include your own stories, illustrations, and examples when appropriate. You don't need to read everything in the participant's guide word for word; rather, explain the concepts in your own words and feel free to pause for any questions or clarifications the participants may have.
- **Clear** — We wrote the program concise enough so you should be able to cover each of the six topics, including the group activities, within an hour or so. However, try not to rush through the material in order to cover it all. It is more important that the participants learn a few concepts well than if you cover everything so quickly that they fail to grasp the concepts. So, make sure you understand the main concepts, explain them clearly, and ask the participants for feedback as to their understanding.
- **Visual** — You have a PowerPoint presentation included with this guide. The suggested answers we have provided are on each of the chapter PowerPoint presentations. Therefore, we encourage you to NOT advance to that slide, and the suggested responses, until after the participants have had a chance to share and discuss their responses. Feel free to use these PowerPoints as you see fit, add and edit to fit your presentation style. We have only provided them as an added resource to use, if desired.
- **Experiential** — Because there are different avenues of learning, encourage participants to write the responses in their books. Allow and encourage participants to ask questions and provide answers, but make sure you manage the discussions appropriately, so you don't run out of time. Also, the participants have a sketch of a house at the end of each chapter. During your closing activity have you participants write in each of the elements of a Home of Hope and Wholeness that have been covered in that chapter.

To help you identify scriptural principle and different group activities we have placed a graphic alongside each activity.



**SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLE**—Please take the time to emphasize the scriptural principle at the beginning of each session. It sets the proper context for the entire topic being discussed.



**SUGGESTED OPENING ACTIVITY**—This can be used as an icebreaker and to give extra time for everyone to arrive before you begin the actual presentation and training.



**GROUP ACTIVITY**—The group activities are not optional; they are a vital part of the program. Encourage everyone in the group to participate in them and please do not skip any activity that has this symbol.



**SUGGESTED CLOSING ACTIVITY**—This is optional, depending on how much time you have left at the end of each session. Remember to provide a few minutes break between sessions for people to stretch, use the restroom, or get a snack or a drink (if you are providing that for them).



**POWERPOINT SLIDES** are created for each of the modules. This graphic indicates where they are to be used.

Our prayer is that God will use you to convey the concepts included in the participant's and in this leader's guide clearly and effectively and that through your presentation they will be inspired and encouraged to go back home to lead and guide the families in their church and community with the message of Hope and Wholeness.





# A FIRM FOUNDATION

## Presenter Notes

### Introduction



#### OPENING ACTIVITY

In order to help facilitate group participation, you may begin this icebreaker by asking for short responses to the following:

1. Who traveled the farthest to get here today?
2. Did any of you have any difficulties on the road?
3. Did any of you get lost?
4. When you're lost, are you more likely to stop and ask for directions, or drive around until you find your way? How about your spouse?

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#### Scriptural Principle

"Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock" Matthew 7: 24-25 (NIV).

Our scripture verse reminds us that our homes must have a strong foundation otherwise, they will crumble when the storms come. And, make no mistake about it, every home will experience storms, sooner or later.

Every builder will tell you that the most important component in a stable building is the foundation. It doesn't matter what the rest of the building looks like if the foundation is not solid. Any mistakes made in the foundation will only get worse as you go higher up in the construction process. Even the untrained eye will clearly see defects as the building gets higher and higher, if the foundation is weak.

In the parable of the wise man who built his house on the rock, Jesus describes the storms of life as a matter of fact. He does not say "IF" the storms come but rather, "WHEN." We can be sure that the storms of life will come and that our home's foundation will be tested. There's no getting around it. The question

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is whether the foundation will stand up to the test. Have we chosen to build our homes on THE ROCK?

This means we must make Jesus the center of our homes every day and make wise choices through the guidance of his Spirit before the storms of life come. It is only as we ground our homes through faith in Him that we may be assured that our foundation is rock-solid.

## Biblical Foundation

Scripture has so much to say regarding the importance of family and ways in which we can build a strong foundation that will withstand the challenges that come our way. Too often, however, we read the same verse or story over and over again without stopping to consider all of the things that, when applied, could positively impact our families. So, what does the Bible have to tell us? Let's put on our "Family Ministries Glasses" and take a look at some familiar passages. Taking a fresh new look will cast a relational hue over familiar passages which perhaps you have read over and over again but may have missed some important lessons.

How many did you list on your own? There are so many verses that give us guidance in all our relationships, both inside and outside of the family. These are included in the Bible to give us a roadmap to follow as we go about our daily lives and interact with others. In other words, they serve as a relational framework on how to live and interact with others.

The Bible also includes lessons and guidance in the narratives or the stories that we have read so many times. If we had to select one book of the Bible that runs the gamut of family dynamics, that book would be Ruth. It is one of the shortest books in the Bible (only 4 chapters) and yet, it is rich in its teaching.

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### ACTIVITY #1

Make a list of all the verses in the Bible that you can think of that speak of ways we are to relate to our family members. It's OK if you don't know the exact reference for now. Just list them. For example: "Husbands, love your wives." Ephesians 5:22.

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Other examples may include but are not limited to the following:

- "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:40).
- "Love your enemies" (Luke 6:27).
- "In humility consider others better than yourselves" (Philippians 2:3).
- "Live at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:18).
- "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21).
- "Rejoice in the wife of your youth" (Proverbs 5:18).
- "Wives, submit to your husband as to the Lord...Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her..." (Ephesians 5:22-25).
- "Husbands...be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life..." (1 Peter 3:7).
- "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your heart. Impress them on your children. Talk about them..." (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7).
- "Fathers, do not exasperate your children, instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).
- "Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding" (Proverbs 4:1). "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord" (Colossians 3:20).
- "Honor your father and your mother..." (Exodus 20:12).
- "You shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14).
- "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife" (Deuteronomy 5:21)

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### ACTIVITY #2

If possible, divide into four groups, with each group having as its assignment the reading and study of one chapter of the book of Ruth. Each group is to list all the family-related issues they can find in the chapter. In other words, what issues/challenges did the family encounter in that chapter? And, then, think about all the ways that the church could minister to families going through those same issues today.

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Ruth	Issues Facing Family	Ways to Minister to Families Facing Similar Situations Today
<b>Chapter 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Famine- No food</li> <li>• Relocation</li> <li>• Immigration</li> <li>• Death of Spouse/Widow</li> <li>• Children Married Non-believers</li> <li>• Death of Children</li> <li>• In-law Relationships</li> <li>• Debt</li> <li>• Return to Homeland</li> <li>• Grief/Loss</li> <li>• Low Self-Worth in Naomi</li> </ul>	Note: Ministry methods will vary. Allow for ample time to discuss possibilities for each family dynamic/challenge. <div>PPT</div>
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single Parenting</li> <li>• Hunger</li> <li>• Search for Food</li> <li>• Daughter-in-law/Mother-in-law Relationship</li> <li>• Child Providing for Parent</li> </ul>	
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depending on Another for Help</li> </ul>	
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marriage/Wedding</li> <li>• Birth of Child</li> <li>• Grandparenting</li> </ul>	

Do you see why the book of Ruth is one of our personal favorites to use in teaching family dynamics? Many individuals can find themselves in the book of Ruth and take comfort that their life experience is not unique. As we share about the hardships and trials that Naomi faced others can relate, identify, and come to understand that they are not alone in the challenges they face.

Through famine, immigration, death, and loss, God was still present with Naomi and Ruth as His plan was unfolding. That grandson, named Obed, whom Naomi held in her arms was in

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the direct lineage of Jesus. What an encouraging story of resilience, trust, and God's leading we can share with others!

## Commitment

A successful marriage and family life do not always have to do with our circumstances, but it does have a lot to do with making a life-long commitment to God, to our spouse, and to our family. It involves making the decision to take the word divorce out of your vocabulary and replacing it with the word commitment. And, this commitment extends to your children as well.

You may say that you are committed to your family. However, where do they actually fall on your priority list? Where does your career/work rate in comparison? And, what about your use of technology? You see, it's easy to say we are committed but our behavior tells the true story of our commitment.

Go ahead, take out your calendar. Most of us have our calendars and appointments on our phones. As you look at your appointments for the next month you may see things such as: committee at work, dental appointment, kid's soccer practice, church board meeting, appointment at car garage, etc. Wait!

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### ACTIVITY #3

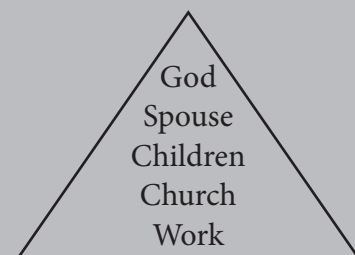
Take a moment to think about your life today.

1. Make a list of the ten most important things (and people) in your life.
2. Then, on the pyramid below, place the top five in order from the most important (at the top) to the least important (at the bottom).
3. Examine your priority pyramid. Does it reflect your faith in God? Does it reflect your commitment to your family?

- Allow those presents to write their own list. Some examples could include:

God	Wife	Family	Children	Extended Family
Work	Money	School	Career	Church
House	Investments	Cars	Vacation	Travel
Friends	Ex-spouse	Stepchildren	Neighbors	Coworkers

- Once they have made their own list, you may ask for some volunteers to share what is on their list.
- Now you can ask them to pick the top five from their list and write them on the pyramid in order of importance.  
One suggested order might be:



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Trusting God starts with having a relationship with Him. Who do you put your trust in? Aren't they the people you know? We need to make sure getting to know God is a priority. Friendship takes time; it takes a commitment to the relationship. It is about talking, listening, and learning about the other person. And, it is only as we do this with God, our Savior, that we truly can learn to trust Him. If learning to trust is dependent upon having a relationship, then here are some ways we can develop that trusting relationship with God:

- **Personal Bible Study and Prayer** — It starts with you, as head of your family. Develop that personal relationship with Jesus through your own Bible study and prayer life.
- **Daily Family Worship** — Time should be set aside each day for family worship. It needs to be age-appropriate, engaging, and geared toward the youngest member of the family. This should be scheduled at the same time each day, all family members should be expected to be present, and nothing else should take the place of this worship time together as a family.
- **Church Attendance** — Having a church family is so important. These members, with like-minded faith values become like an extended family where faith is emphasized, taught, reinforced, and practiced in meaningful ways.
- **Prayer** — Most of us pray before we eat our meals and we may even pray before bed, but prayer needs to be so much more than that. We need to make talking to Jesus as common in our homes as talking to each other. Read more below concerning the importance of prayer.

Spending time with Jesus in all your daily activities will assist in building that special relationship with Him so that you will learn to trust Him, even when the winds start howling and the waves start spilling over into the boat. Above all, you will see how much God cares about you and your family and come to know that He is in the boat, right beside you, during every storm. Trust Him!

## Prayer

Prayer is another one of those main ingredients to building a home of hope and wholeness. Here are some beautiful reminders about prayer.

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### A Special Note to Parents

Your child will learn to trust Jesus as they observe you. Do they witness you on your knees in prayer? Do they see you having personal daily devotional and prayer time? How do you handle disappointments? Do you go to church each week? What is your attitude towards God and the church? Yes, it matters. Your trusting relationship with God will go a long way in helping them develop the same.

- **Pray for Wisdom** — “But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting.” (James 1:5–6)
- **Relax, God’s in the Boat** — “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6–7)
- **Talk to God as to a Friend** — “Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us but brings us up to Him” (White, 1956, p. 93).

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### What Have They Seen in Your House?

Did you ever stop to consider the fact that your home has the potential to be a powerful witness for Christ? If asked, what would your neighbors say about your homelife, your relationship to your spouse, your parenting, your values? What do others see as you go about your day to day life?

Emissaries from Babylon once came to King Hezekiah of Judah out of interest in his miraculous recovery from a fatal illness and the supernatural sign linked with it (the movement ten degrees backward of the sundial shadow described in 2 Kings 20). Hezekiah happily received these guests, but he seems to have been silent about his healing experience. He evidently put little or no emphasis on the things in his house that would have opened the hearts of these inquiring ambassadors to the knowledge of the true God. Hezekiah gave the ambassadors a tour of his home that showcased his armory and expansive treasure. When they had left, the prophet Isaiah confronted him with a penetrating question: “What have they seen in your house?” (2 Kings 20:15; Isaiah 39:4). The question was sobering and too late Hezekiah realized that his pride had led him to give away state secrets of national wealth and armaments. Even more importantly, he had missed a rare opportunity to share the truth about the God who had healed him.

Let’s us not be too quick to harshly judge King Hezekiah. Are we not often guilty of the exact same thing? What do we

You see, if our homes are built on a strong biblical foundation, if we are committed to being the kind of husband, wife, or single person that God has called us to be, then it will be no secret to our neighbors and others who know us

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- | Family Mission Statement  | Ways to Accomplish Mission |
|---|----------------------------|
| NOTE: Statements and Ways to Accomplish Will Vary. Take the Time for Sharing! | 1.                         |
|   | 2.                         |
|   | 3.                         |
|   | 4.                         |
|   | 5.                         |

## A Ministry of Evangelism

Now that we have explored ways to strengthen the spiritual foundation of our homes, we must consider the potential impact that the members of a Christ-centered home could have upon their communities. Each family represents a powerful evangelistic team who can share Jesus with others.

You see, all too often we leave evangelism to the pastor or other professionals and think of it as an event or series of meetings held in the church. However, evangelism at its best happens each day as you interact with others around you. It is more of a lifestyle than something that happens occasionally. We need to put family and evangelism together to discover the powerful life-changing force it can create.

Remember, family ministries is a ministry of evangelism. It must first begin inside the walls of our own home. Look at these powerful words,

“Far more powerful than any sermon that can be preached is the influence of a true home upon human hearts and lives. . . Our sphere of influence may seem narrow, our ability small, our opportunities few, our acquirements limited; yet wonderful possibilities are ours through a faithful use of the opportunities of our own homes” (White, 1905, pp. 352, 355).

But family ministries, or family evangelism, cannot be confined to the home; it must also be what happens once we leave our dwelling place.

“The mission of the home extends beyond its own members. The Christian home is to be an object lesson, illustrating the excellence of the true principles of life. Such an illustration will be a power for good in the world...As the youth go out from such a home, the lessons they have learned are imparted. Nobler principles of life are introduced into other households, and an uplifting influence works in the community” (White, 1952, p. 31).

So, as you answer the question, “What have they seen in your house?” and as you review the activity that you did above, thinking of practical ways to fulfill the mission in your home, understand that the answer to that question and every one of

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those strategies is evangelistic in nature. Yes, your family is one of the most powerful evangelizing teams in the world!

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### SUGGESTED CLOSING ACTIVITY

You may do this if time allows. Ask those in attendance to answer these questions:

1. Considering the parable of the man who built his house on the rock and the one who built on the sand (Matt 7:24–27), is your family foundation on solid rock, or on sand but with a nice view?
2. What might you have to change in order to shore up the foundation?
3. How can others help you in the process?
4. When you consider your life and family today, is your pressing need to learn more, or to practice daily what you have already learned?

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## Wrap-Up

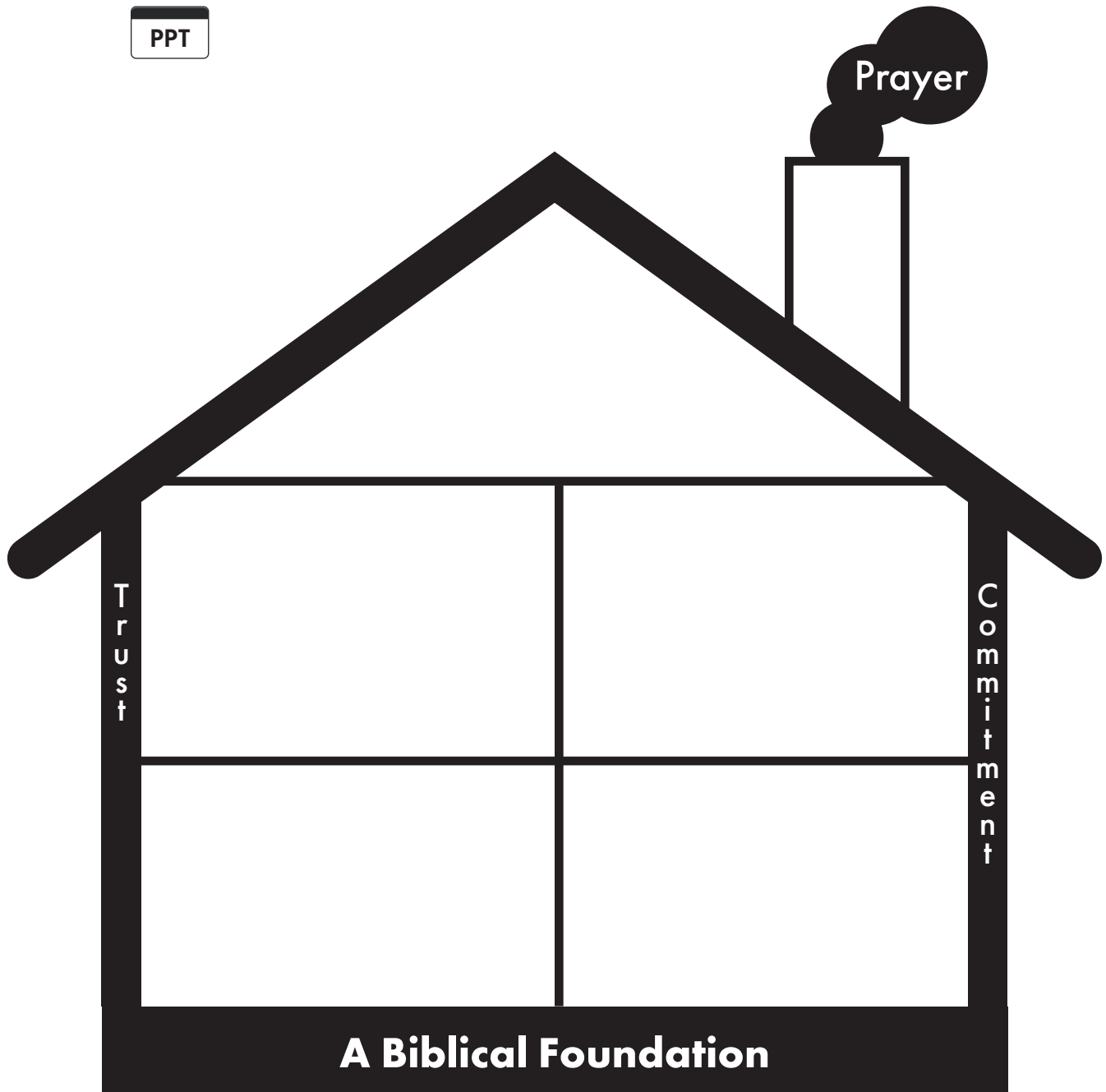
So, what does the solid foundation of a home look like? It is one that rests upon strong biblical principles and one where faith is evident to all you come in contact with. In summary:

- Build your home upon THE ROCK!
- Commit your marriage and your family to God and make Him a priority in your life.
- Make sure your priority to your family is evident in the way in which you live.
- Trust in the one who is in the boat with you!
- Pray for wisdom in all the decisions you make.
- Live in such a way that your home reflects Jesus to others!
- Make sure others see Jesus in your house!

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# RELATIONSHIP AND MARRIAGE

## Scriptural Principle



“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” Ephesians 4:2-3 (NIV)

## Introduction

Whether single or married, there are relationship tools and skills that we can teach and share with others that, when learned, can be very useful and powerful. Imagine what would happen to all the relationships in your church and community if basic relationship skills were mastered!

Please keep in mind that there is no way in which we can teach all the relationship skills and marriage education in one chapter. This topic is one for which we have written an entire book. So, it’s a challenge to select what to include and what to omit. In doing so, we kept in mind that the purpose of this training program is to highlight the most important aspects and provide resources for further education. That has also been our focus in approaching this chapter.



### ACTIVITY #1

Make a list of all the ways that society pressures young people to get married. Then, make a list of ways that we, as a church family, put undue pressure on single adults.

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Society Pressures	Church Family Pressures
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

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## Singleness Is NOT a Disease

Culture has made singleness seem like a disease and we, as a church community and as individuals, have placed too much pressure on young people to get married. Hopefully you discovered that fact in the activity above. This undue pressure often results in hasty decisions that lead to marital disaster and a lot of pain. We have sat with too many broken-hearted people who rushed to make one of the most important decisions of their life only to be very sad and sorry for the hasty decisions they took. Their impulsiveness had resulted in broken promises and trying to pick up the pieces that were left of their shattered lives.

Many of you will attest to the fact that you have prayed countless times for God to lead you to the right spouse. For some of you, the wait has been too long, and the prayers seem to bounce off the ceiling of your home or the walls in that heavenly throne room. Stop! Wait! And, wait some more! Wait, until He reveals the right partner. Over and over again, we have told single adults, “It is better to be single and alone than to be married and alone.”

We often ask God for patience, but then follow with, “but please hurry up!” Patience is in short supply these days and we want instant gratification. When we ask for something, we are making the assumption that it is for our good. But what if it’s not? Maybe God knows that if He answers that prayer it will be to our detriment. After all, He sees the end from the beginning and His timing never fails. So, pray for His will to be revealed and patience to wait for the right time.

Please, educate your church family on the harmful effects of putting pressure on young people to get married before God reveals His will. After all, His will may include singleness. Focus on educational topics such as contained in this manual, let up on the pressure to get married, and stop elevating marital status over singleness. Help them have the tools to BE the right person instead of putting the spotlight on the need to FIND the right person!

So, how does one go about that task? What is something you can share with those who are not married? Make your own spiritual growth a priority! This is the main element to becoming the person God intends for you to be. Becoming the right person must come before finding the right person. Here are

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some suggestions for single adults with accompanying Bible promises:

- **Pray**—Be in constant contact with Jesus. Tell Him your heart's desires, your dreams, your wishes, your concerns. "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke 21:36 NKJV)
- **Trust**—Trust Him to lead. Do not trust your own desires or instincts as all too often they are flawed. Trust the one who is an expert at making matches made in heaven! "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding." (Prov. 3:5 NKJV)
- **Wait on the Lord!**—Learning this one thing has saved many couples from experiencing the break-up of their home. Don't rush into a relationship that may not be God's will. Wait on His timing and remember, it may be different than your own. "Wait on the LORD; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the LORD!" (Psalm 27:14 NKJV)

## Pre-Marital Counseling

In addition to helping our young people understand that they must become the right person in order to find the right person, there is one valuable resource that we need to understand better and share more. When young people begin to wonder if this is "the one"—STOP! Encourage them to not set a wedding date until they have sought biblically based pre-marital preparation. This one thing could determine if that relationship will endure for a lifetime or if it will end in heartache. We have recommended that couples who have been dating for some time and are beginning to consider the possibility of getting married, consult with their pastor or a counselor to begin the process of marriage preparation. For many years we have used and trained pastors and counselors in the use of Prepare-Enrich ([www.prepare-Enrich.com](http://www.prepare-Enrich.com)) as a valuable tool for both the couple and the person facilitating the process of marriage preparation.

Pre-marital preparation, which includes education and counseling, is designed for engaged couples and for persons considering marriage. It is a program through which a couple interested in marriage receive education on topics relevant to

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the couple relationship such as: communication, conflict resolution, budgeting and finances, how to relate to in-laws and friends, sex, parenting, and relationship roles. The marriage preparation process helps to facilitate the conversation and improve how the couple relates to each other. The education is most often done by professional counselors, spiritual leaders, or others specifically trained in the use of this tool.

One helpful aspect of premarital preparation is that couples have time to stop and reflect over their time together. This not only slows down the relationship process instead of rushing into a decision, but also helps facilitate conversation on topics that many ignore, evade, or simply have not considered. But more importantly, it teaches important skills that will help them sort through the challenges of married life. Taking time to evaluate their relationship, some couples may even decide not to get married. Deciding to end the relationship before marriage could have prevented a potentially painful and expensive divorce process. This underscores a major benefit of premarital education and skills training—it reduces the odds of going through a divorce.

“Research conclusively shows that couples who succeed, gain the knowledge they need before they settle into destructive patterns that often lead to divorce. In fact, you are 31 percent less likely to get divorced if you get some sort of premarital training before you marry. Marriage expert, David Olson, reports that 80 percent of the couples that did premarital training, stayed together” (Olson & Olson, 2000).

Appropriate marriage preparation will help set the stage for a lifetime of happiness by forcing discussion on topics the couple may have previously considered unimportant or irrelevant. It assists in developing healthy ways to communicate and deal with conflict. Once the couple has gone through a process of marriage preparation, which may take between six and ten weeks (depending of the couple’s needs), they can then decide to take it to the next level and become engaged. The period of engagement and wedding preparation may take another several months, which gives them additional time to continue the preparation for marriage.

One of the best gifts we could possibly give to our young people before their wedding day is to make them aware of

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the value of formal premarital preparation. In fact, if anyone thinks the cost of the premarital preparation is too high, consider it an investment in the future of the young people of your church. The reality is that, compared to the cost of the wedding, the cost of marriage preparation is minimal. Premarital preparation costs little, but it is a priceless gift!

## Communication

Do you know what the most important skill is to bring into any relationship? Yes, there are many skills you may need but perhaps none more important than having good communication. And, when it comes to that, it is definitely more important to listen than to speak. The bible tells us, “My dear friends, you should be quick to listen and slow to speak or to get angry” (James 1:19 CEV). Knowing that you have been heard and understood is priceless. So, we will discuss communication skills before we proceed to conflict management, because how can one manage conflict if they cannot communicate?

Regardless of whether one is married or single, having a knowledge of and practicing good communication skills is a valued asset. Let’s begin our conversation around communication by understanding the basic concepts that surround it. To begin, let’s take a look at four basic avenues for communication:

1. **Verbal**—The first way we communicate is with our words. Verbal communication is necessary in healthy relationships. You must make a commitment to communicate verbally, even if it is sometimes uncomfortable or painful to do so. Good communication makes everyone feel valued and may keep resentment and anger from building up and erupting at a later time. People who don’t talk to each other won’t have a way to understand one another or heal damaged relationships. When communicating, you must understand the power of words and choose your words wisely, because they can either hurt or heal. In fact, the Bible states in Proverbs 18:21 (NIV), “The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.” Nothing can hurt you more than the tongue. Good verbal communication begins by using words that are bathed in love. Our words can be honest but also caring; calming, not volatile; they are appropriate words, not curses or demeaning words. The old saying, “sticks and stones may break my

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4. **Visual**—Visual communication is done through photographs, art, drawings, sketches, charts and graphs to convey information or a message. We often use visuals to help during a presentation so we can provide helpful context along with whatever written and/or verbal information we provide. Because we all have different learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, etc.), visual communication may be more helpful for some while verbal messages may be more helpful to others. However, keep in mind that context matters. Tow home are we communicating and for what purpose?

Healthy verbal communication has two ingredients: assertiveness and active listening. Let's look at each:

1. **Assertiveness**—Assertiveness is the ability to express your feelings and ask for what you want in the relationship. Being assertive does not mean that you are selfish or aggressive. What it means is that you would like to see more communication in your relationship.

Assertiveness is a very valuable communication skill. In successful relationships, both individuals tend to be quite assertive. Rather than assuming the other can read their minds, they share how they feel and ask clearly and directly for what they want. The best way to be assertive is to use "I" statements and to avoid using "you" statements. For instance, you may say something like, "When you didn't call me to tell me you'd be late, I was worried (or frustrated, or angry, etc.)." These "I" statements simply share your feelings without placing blame or accusing the other person. In contrast, notice this "you" statement: "You make me angry." This can be even more harmful when you add generalized comments like, "You never call me," or "You don't care about my feelings," etc. When you are assertive, you make a constructive request and you are positive and respectful in your communication. You will also use polite phrases such as "please" and "thank you." Here are some examples of assertive statements:

- *"I'm feeling out of balance. While I love spending time with you, I also want to spend time with my friends. I would like us to find some time to talk about this."*
- *"I want to take a ski vacation next winter, but I know you prefer to go to the beach. I'm feeling confused about what choice we should make. Can we discuss this further?"*

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2. **Active Listening**—The second ingredient of healthy communication is active listening, which is the ability to let the other person know you understand them by restating their message. In order to listen actively it is important that you listen attentively without interruption and then restate what you heard. You don't simply repeat words, like a parrot might. Instead, acknowledge both the content and the feelings of the message from the other person. Remember, you may be great at talking but you need to master the art of listening. When you restate what you heard the other person say, you let them know whether you clearly understood the message they sent. Here are a couple examples of active listening, based on the assertive statements above:

- “I hear you say you are feeling ‘out of balance’ and enjoy the time we spend together but that you also need more time to be with your friends. You want to plan a time to talk about this. Am I understanding correctly?”
- “If I understand what you said, you would prefer to go skiing next winter but you think I would rather go to the beach. Is that correct?”

- “If I understand what you said, you would prefer to go skiing next winter but you think I would rather go to the beach. Is that correct?”

When each of you knows what the other person feels and wants (assertiveness), and when each knows they have been heard and understood (active listening), communication is enhanced, and understanding is achieved. These two communication skills, when used together, can help enhance your relationships.

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## ACTIVITY #2: ISLAND SURVIVAL

*This activity is to be completed in teams of two.*

Imagine yourself shipwrecked with your partner on a tropical desert island. The two of you are the only survivors, you have no idea where you are, and a storm appears to be on the way. You decide that you need to prepare to survive on this island for some time, and to find some way to ensure you can be spotted by a rescue party. There are a lot of items from the ship on the beach that could help you, but you can only carry four items.

**Step 1:** Each of you write down on a separate piece of paper what you consider to be the four most important items to keep from the list below. Do this individually and do not discuss your choices at this point.

Ship's Inventory:

- Two changes of clothing
- AM-FM and short-wave radio
- Ten gallons of water
- Pots and pans
- Matches
- Shovel
- Backpack
- Toilet paper
- Tents
- Two sleeping bags
- Knife
- Small life raft, with sail
- Sunblock lotion
- Cookstove and lantern
- Long rope
- Two walkie-talkies
- Freeze-dried food for seven days
- One change of clothing
- Flares
- Compass
- Regional aerial maps
- Gun with six bullets
- First-aid kit with penicillin
- Oxygen tanks

**Step 2:** Now, share your list with your partner. Discuss each of your choices and together, come up with a consensus list of four items. This means talking it over and working as a team to come to an agreement. Both of you need to be influential in discussing your viewpoint, explaining why you selected the items you did, and in making the final decisions.

**Step 3:** Once you have a consensus on a third list, it's time to evaluate how the game went. Think about how effective you were at influencing your partner and how effective they were at influencing you. Did either of you try to dominate? Were you competitive? Ask yourself if you had fun. Did you work well as a team and feel included, or do you feel like you gave-in?

Your Individual Choices	Partner's Choices (write as they are shared in Step 2)	Consensus List
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.



# Conflict Management

Did you happen to notice that we entitled this section conflict management instead of conflict resolution? What is the difference? Well, Conflict management and conflict resolution are often used synonymously. Managing conflict implies that the conflict exists, but it is controlled in such a way that the conflict is not a major problem. On the other hand, resolving conflict means that some end or solution to the conflict has been achieved.

Research by Dr. John Gottman (2017) proves that 69% of problems in a relationship are unsolvable. For example, these may be things like personality traits your partner has that rub you the wrong way or long-standing issues around spending and saving money. Gottman’s research findings emphasize the idea that we must learn to manage conflict rather than avoid or attempt to eliminate it altogether. Trying to solve unsolvable problems is counterproductive, and sometimes you will never completely eliminate them. However, discussing them and learning to manage differences is constructive and provides a positive opportunity for understanding and growth.

Did you catch the fact that, according to research 69% of issues are unsolvable? Wow! It’s no wonder that we often get frustrated at trying to resolve things versus trying to manage them. So, what are the “rules of engagement” as you approach this process of learning to manage conflicts? Here are ten steps to assist you in managing couple conflicts (adapted from Prepare-Enrich, 2017). NOTE: These same 10 steps may be taught and used in other relationships, outside of your family:

1. **Decide on a Time and a Place**—In order to prevent someone from feeling compelled to give an account of themselves on the spot, and to avoid an indefinite delay for resolving conflict, setting a time and a place for discussion is a must. Feel free to say, “Hey, I need time to process this,” or “I am too frustrated to give a good response at the moment,” and then ask for a time to resume the discussion. This lets your spouse know you care about them and that you aren’t running away from conflict, even if you aren’t currently able to discuss it. So, you both need to agree on a specific time and place when you can discuss this issue in private and give it the dedicated time it deserves.
2. **Define the Issue**—Define the problem and don’t be vague. What is it that you need to manage? Notice that it is ONE

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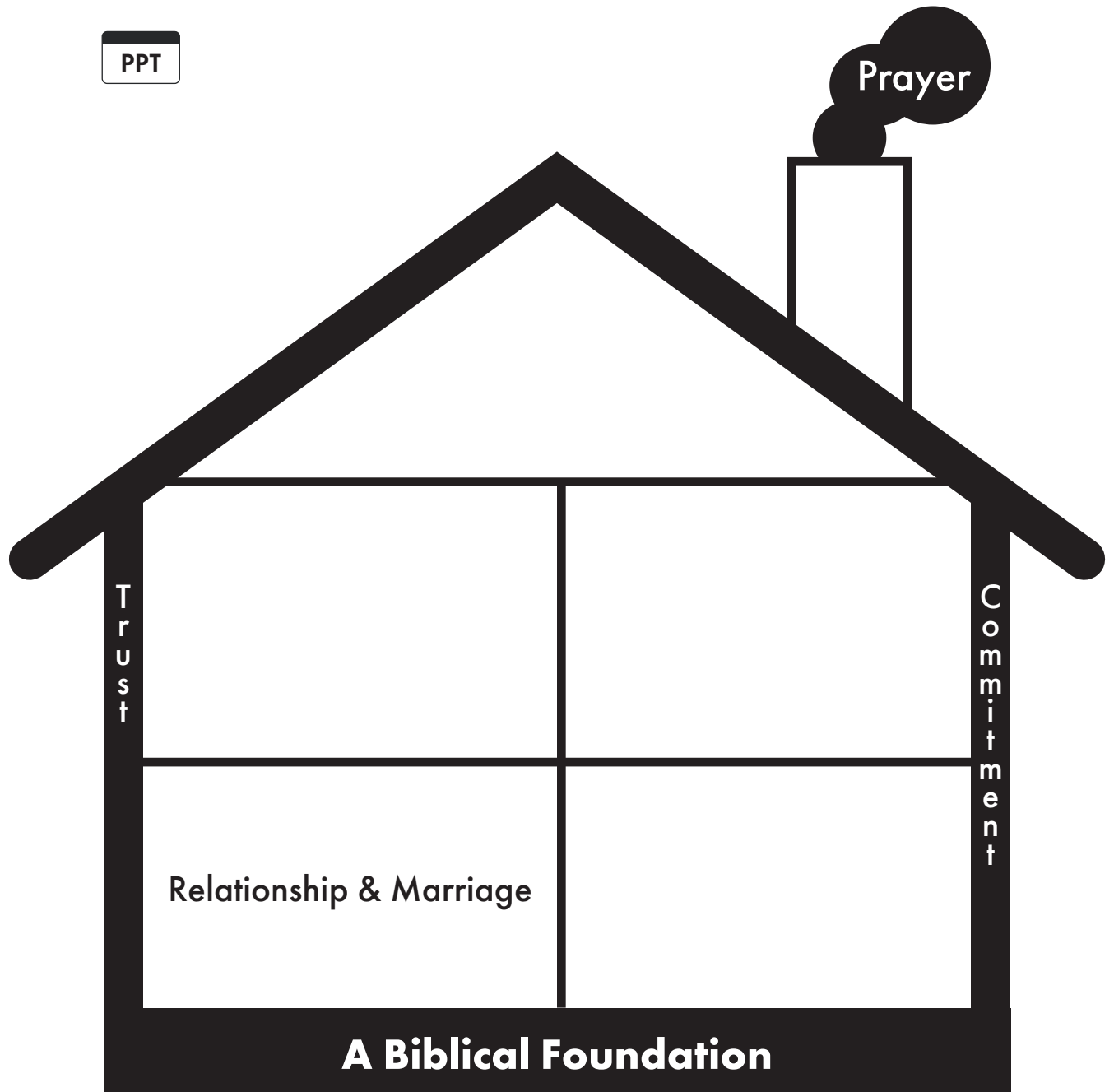
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## Wrap-Up

As you approach relationship and marriage education, teach good communication skills, educate on the steps to managing conflict, teach about the value of premarital counseling, and do not approach singleness as a disease. And, please take the time to review additional resources on this important topic so that you have them to share with others. If you do not already have one, start a lending library at your church so your members have access to these additional materials to read and study.

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### Scriptural Principle

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” Deuteronomy 6:5–9 (NIV)

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### Introduction

As we begin this topic there is a very important fact to bear in mind. Many families today consist of individuals other than a biological mother and father in their caregiving role. Children may be parented by a single parent, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, foster-parents, an adoptive family, etc. We must keep in mind the need to value and respect all the varying possibilities as we teach this topic.

Have you ever started a bon fire? What do you need to start a good fire? Can you start a fire with wet, green, fresh wood? Possibly, but it certainly will take more work and effort. Can you start a fire out of ashes? Can you start a fire in the middle of a hurricane, or a thunderstorm, pouring rain, or with the wind blowing wildly?

I (Pamela) vividly remember my grandfather teaching me how to start a fire. You see, my grandparent’s home was heated by a wood stove and that also meant that all my grandmother’s delicious meals were made in her little wood burning stove. Therefore, gathering wood and learning how to build a good fire was a much-needed skill when I went to their house for a visit. A rule of the house was that the wood box needed to always be kept full.

First of all, we had to select the perfect wood or log. It could not be green and preferably not wet. Then we had to work together on grandpa’s two-man saw to cut the wood. My arms would ache after only a short time of pulling that saw with my grandpa. Next came stacking the neatly cut logs in the wood bin. We also had to go out in search of kindling (dry twigs and sticks to be used to accelerate the flames and help the wood

logs catch on fire). No step could be skipped, and each led to the culmination of a bright, hot fire burning in that old pot belly stove!

In the same way, if we want to kindle God’s fire in our children, we need to have the right conditions and the right materials. So, what are those conditions in order to kindle a spiritual fire in our children? There are three important aspects that must not be overlooked:

- Your Own Fire must be Burning
- Your Actions must “Match” your Words
- Your Attitude (toward God, Bible truth, the church) will Fuel or Quench the Fire in your Child

We hope you didn’t miss the point there. Being the type of parent that God has called you to be means that first, you must be the type of person God has called you to be!



**ACTIVITY #1**

In a national survey of the state of families in America (Bowman, 2012), parents reportedly believe that raising children today is more complicated than it used to be. Do you agree that there are things that today’s parents must contend with that the previous generations didn’t? Complete the chart below as you reflect on this research finding.

Top Issues Facing Parents in Previous Generations	Top Issues Facing Parents Today
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

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## Before Baby

Perhaps it is important to begin this parenting education piece by discussing things that one can do before baby arrives. The Bible has some valuable insights about making proper preparations, “For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it - lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish?’” (Luke 14:28-30). What does that scripture verse have to do with parenting? This verse reminds us of all the planning one does before a building is constructed. Notice that proper planning must take place prior to construction. One must first consider the materials needed, the cost to complete the project, and that is just the beginning of the list. This takes a great deal of thought and careful preparation.

When it comes to parenting your child what planning took place prior to your child's arrival? Was any preparation required? You may have set up the baby's room with a crib and stocked up on diapers, t-shirts, and baby pajamas. But, what did you do to prepare in other, more important ways? The truth is that we do a lot of planning and preparation for most other things in life. As a teenager we take driver's education in order to get our driver's license. We go to college and get an education for our chosen career path. And, in order to maintain required certifications, we even go to continuing education classes. We may even enroll in cooking classes or art classes in order to develop our hobby. But when it comes to parenting, we usually assume this role with very little or no preparation at all.

In the ideal situation, preparation would have taken place before even becoming pregnant. However, with so many unplanned pregnancies today, parenting preparation is usually the exception to the rule. There are many things to consider before taking on the parenting role. If, however, you are already a parent, don't despair. It is not too late to think about these things.

1. **Spiritual Readiness**—You will be co-parenting with God. Have you committed yourself completely to Him? Are you ready to listen to Him? Out of all the things on this list, perhaps this is the most important. As mentioned

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We mention this so that new parents become aware that it is normal for marital satisfaction to decline after the birth of a child. Knowing this, they can plan and be very intentional about strengthening their marriage during a time when the child, or children, claim a lot of their attention. For couples who already have difficulties in their relationship, and who think that having a child will bring them closer together, beware because often the opposite is the case. We have known couples who were having problems and decided that perhaps having a child would be the solution only to find out that once the child was born, their marital difficulties only increased. So, be certain your marriage is strong before adding a baby.

## Discipline vs. Punishment

It's important to understand the difference between discipline and punishment as this one thing could greater impact behavior in children.

- **Punishment** is a penalty for doing something wrong. It involves the experience of pain, loss, or suffering (physical, emotional, mental) for a mistake a child has made so that the child will learn that it is painful to do what is wrong and thus choose (or be forced to choose) to do what is right. Parents and caregivers often punish their children to satisfy their own anger. At other times, parents and caregivers punish because of a mistaken sense of justice that demands that children must pay a penalty for their “crimes.”
- **Discipline**, on the other hand, is a teaching process that leads to a changed behavior, a desired outcome. Discipline helps children improve themselves. It helps them learn lessons that will make them better people. The primary aims of discipline is to resolve impending conflict and teach children self-discipline. To discipline is to teach.

Too many parents confuse punishment and discipline. They believe that a parent or caregiver must use punishment to produce a well-disciplined child; a literal “spare the rod and spoil the child” attitude. Actually, when parents or caregivers punish (rather than discipline) to eradicate childish irresponsibility and persistent challenging, they may be setting the stage for family conflict. Outward conflict develops when a child decides to fight against what he/she considers unjust treatment.

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The result is often feelings of rejection and intense resentment toward their parents or caregivers.

Think about it this way: Punishment is arbitrarily imposed, while discipline relates directly to a child’s inappropriate behavior. For example, Kevin was late getting home from school and had not notified his mother. If she chose to punish him, she might take his bicycle away for two weeks or spank him for his irresponsibility. If, on the other hand, she chose a disciplinary action, she might not allow Kevin to watch his favorite television program that evening so that he could have the time to finish the homework and chores he’d neglected by arriving home late. She might also set up careful limitations for future behavior. “Unless you call home and receive permission to be late, you must be home thirty minutes after school each day or no television that day.” When discipline is effective, it avoids needless conflict and enhances the possibilities for changed behavior.

Why is it important that we understand the difference? Because in order to understand how to be a disciple-making parent, we need to better understand what it means to discipline. Here’s the deal - the root word for discipline is *discipulus*, a Latin word meaning “pupil,” which is also the root of the word “disciple.” If we’re raising disciples, by definition, they need discipline!

“Parenting for discipleship, which is our main goal as Christian parents, means we teach and guide our children to grow closer to and more like Jesus every day. We can’t do that by constantly punishing our kids, looking back at their failures, reminding them of their shortcomings, and focusing on misbehavior or mistakes. Discipleship parenting means we exercise discipline in our own lives while attempting to teach our children to do the same. We do that by staying calm, firmly addressing misbehavior, teaching our children a better way to handle it next time, and showing grace and mercy to our kids by moving on and letting past failures go” (Martin, 2017).

So, now that we understand that discipline is better than punishment, let’s talk about raising disciples!

**A Disciple-Making Parent**

As Jesus addressed His disciples, He gave them a directive, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them

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in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you...” Matthew 28:19–20 (NIV).

Those directives, delivered by Jesus, were not only for Jesus’ disciples; they are also for us today. Many of us have taken the words of that gospel commission to heart and have been doing all we can to tell others about our soon coming Savior. Sometimes, however, we are so involved in working for the salvation of others outside of the home that we tend to forget and neglect the salvation of those closest to us - our children.

In a very succinct way, Ellen G. White writes, “Our work for Christ is to begin with the family, in the home...” and then she asserts in a very emphatic way, “There is no missionary field more important than this” (White, *Christian Service*, p.53). Please don’t miss this very important point: being a parent is one of the most important roles you will ever have. It is God-given and we should not neglect the salvation of those closest to us.

What we sometimes forget is that the gospel commission includes our children, and we, their parents, are to be the primary disciple-makers. That work should not be left up to the church school, the sabbath school, the youth director, or the pastor. Yes, all of those can support what you do at home. However, YOU have been called by God to be the primary disciple maker of your child.

The goal of discipline is not to break a child’s will and force them to submit. Rather, the goal of discipline is to guide them to become disciples. Jesus led His disciples gently, wisely, and patiently, not angrily, impatiently, or abusively. Keep in mind that discipline is not something you do to your child, but something you do for your child. The best example of disciple-making found in the New Testament is that set by Jesus Himself.

As He preached His first public message, the first sermon delivered to the multitude gathered on the slope of a hill overlooking the Sea of Galilee, Jesus began to set the stage for His instructions for those who wished to follow Him. In most cultures today when a teacher delivers his/her instructions to his/her students they stand up, but in Jesus’ time Jewish teachers would sit to expound the Scriptures, often with disciples sitting at their feet. A look at the methods Jesus used on His

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making are important His commission to His disciples is to “go and make more disciples” (Matt 28:18-20). Jesus equipped His disciples to go out and serve others and tell others about Him. Disciple-making parents are to do the exact same thing- prepare their children to go out, serve others, make a positive difference in this world, and to tell others about Jesus. All too soon, your little one will be grown up and out of the house. It is our job to prepare them for a life here on this earth and for eternity in heaven. We can engage with them in service opportunities while they are still young to prepare them to continue to do this as they grow into adulthood.

Parenting is not just about teaching children rules and regulations. The role of a disciple-making parent is to nurture children by being a positive role model, loving them unconditionally, spending quality time with them, and equipping them to disciple others around them. In essence, disciple making parents pass on the torch of faith to the next generation.

### A Discipled Child Becomes a Disciple-Maker

Jesus’ method of equipping His disciples and then sending them out is a powerful one for us, as parents. It is only in fulfilling this step that we see faith being passed on from generation to generation.

Service is a powerful tool that keeps that spiritual fire lit under your children. They are so willing to give and serve and are waiting for us to give them opportunities. The truth is that it is us, as adults, who quench the desire that children naturally have to serve. We are too busy or too tired to put in the effort. It is true that engaging your child in service and ministry opportunities takes time but, it is well worth any effort it takes. And, the payoff is huge.

Participating in Christian service has a powerful impact in the faith development of teens. Christian service experiences make faith real and alive for young people. These experiences foster growth in faith and often change the lives of young people. And, participating as a family unit helps to strengthen those family bonds. It may be tempting and easier to let your child go and do a community service project with a church or school group. However, when you do it together as a family team you are modeling a caring, compassionate, and giving spirit. Engaging in service with one’s family can be a powerful

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This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.



Teaching our children the joy of serving is one way to disciple them. And, that service becomes much more rewarding and exciting when we utilize the gifts of the child. It's important to recognize that each child has unique gifts and allowing them to grow spiritually is to match their gifts to the ways they can best serve. So, on the chart below:

- ## 38 BUILDING HOMES OF HOPE AND WHOLENESS



Gifts/Talents of a Child	Ways to Use that Gift to Serve/Minister	PPT
1.	1.	
2.	2.	
3.	3.	
4.	4.	
5.	5.	



### SUGGESTED CLOSING ACTIVITY

You may do this if time allows. Ask those in attendance to answer these questions:

1. How do you demonstrate your love for God? How does it fulfill Deut 6:5? What will you plan to do today to demonstrate this love?
2. How important is it to you that your children grow up to love God and appreciate the role He plays in their life?
3. How can you help teach them about the love of God?

### Wrap-Up

As parents, our heart's desire is to have our children in heaven with us. After all, it is the one treasure that God has given us on this earth that we can take with us to heaven. And, the lifetime that we have with them here on this earth is short compared to an eternity together in heaven.

God has entrusted to us the precious gift of our children. It is our responsibility as parents to introduce them to Jesus. We need to talk about Jesus when we get up, when we go to bed, in our coming in, and in our going out (Deuteronomy 6:5-9). Our children need to see Jesus as a member of our family. They need to hear us talking ABOUT Him in our conversa-

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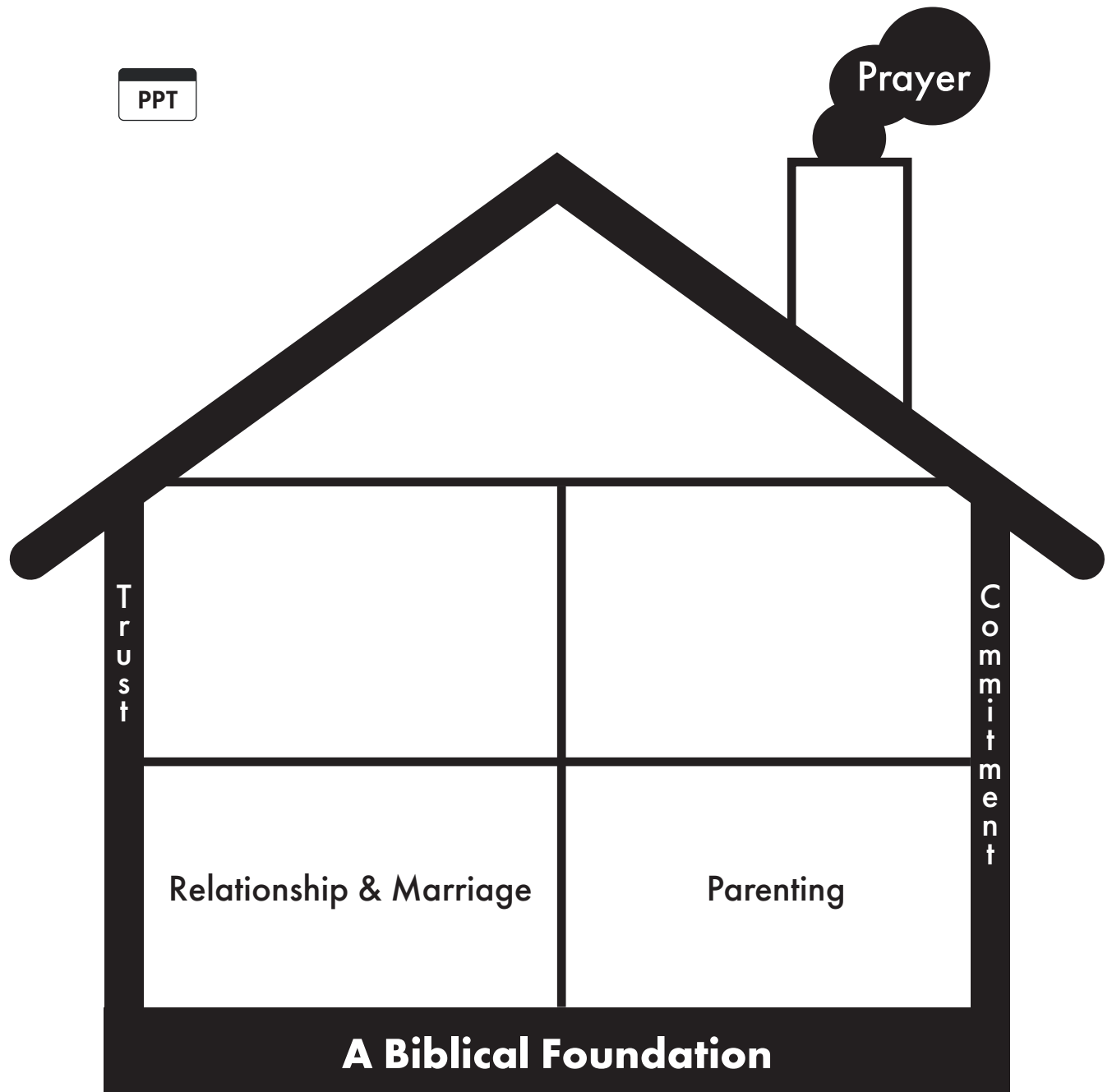
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tions throughout the day. They need to hear us talking TO Him about our problems and our joys, large and small.

A fire cannot be maintained when attention is only given to it one day a week. It is the same with the spiritual fire that we want to burn in the hearts of our children. Going to church one day a week will not keep that fire lit. It may serve to ignite a flame; however, those flames will soon die out if they do not receive care to keep them burning. That fire for Jesus, in their little hearts, must be fueled on a daily ongoing basis in our homes if it is to remain a glowing, bright, and hot fire.

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# SEXUALITY



## Scriptural Principle

“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.”  
Ephesians 5:3 (NIV)

## Introduction

God’s plan for sexuality has been marred by the world of sin in which we live. We are bombarded with messages from the media that are directly in opposition to the word of God. Let’s take a moment and think about what some of those messages from culture are and then, let’s see how many references we can think of from God’s word regarding sexuality:



## ACTIVITY #1

List all the messages that today’s culture and media send to us regarding sexuality. Then, list as many Bible references you can think of that have to do with sexuality.

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Culture/Media Messages Regarding Sex	Biblical References
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

PPT

## Porn Is the Norm

Pornography is “normal” in today’s world. It has become an accepted part of society and images and scenes that used to be banned from prime-time television are now considered to be normal viewing. There is no missing this message as inappro-

priate images are splashed all over magazine covers, television screens, social media posts, and Hollywood. We are inundated with it even when we are not searching for it. It finds its own way into our homes even if it is initially uninvited.

Ease of access is the biggest driving factor in the increase of pornography use. This ease of access means that unintentional or inadvertent exposure to porn is increasing among minors. Your child could be doing a google search of a very innocent topic and pornography sites will come up in the search. One click on that site could easily lead to an addiction.

Consider this: “The average age of first exposure to pornography is now only 11 years old. As many as 93.2% of boys and 62.1% of girls first see porn before they turn 18” (Hull, 2020). Wow! Those stats should be very alarming to all of us, as parents. And, keep in mind that 11 is the average age so, for many, it is much younger than that. In addition, early exposure to porn increases the chances of use and addiction later in life.

Many studies have been conducted on online pornography use. These have revealed some interesting [facts about porn use](#) among our young people: (NCOSE, 2019)

- **Frequency**—64% of young people, ages 13–24, actively seek out pornography weekly or more often.
- **Teenage Girls vs. Women**—Teenage girls are significantly more likely to actively seek out porn than women 25 years old and above.
- **Increases Victimization**—A study of 14 to 19-year-olds found that females who consumed pornographic videos were at a significantly greater likelihood of being victims of sexual harassment or sexual assault.
- **Increased Verbal & Physical Aggression**—Consumption of pornography was significantly associated with increases in verbal and physical aggression, among males and females alike.
- **Traffic on Porn Sites**—Porn sites receive more regular traffic than Netflix, Amazon, & Twitter combined each month.
- **Downloads**—35% of all internet downloads are porn related.
- **Teen Porn**—The “teen” porn category has topped porn site searches for the last six years.

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- **Data**—At least 30% of all data transferred across the internet is porn related.
- **Fast Growing**—Recorded child sexual exploitation (known as “child porn”) is one of the fastest-growing online businesses.

And, if that doesn’t alarm you, here’s another danger to our children: Research has demonstrated that children are more susceptible than adults to addictions and to developmental effects on the brain (NCOSE, 2019). And, did you notice in those stats that teenage girls are not immune to the effects of porn? That’s right! Pornography use is not just an issue for males.

Pornography is robbing us of the ability to enjoy sex as a gift from God, exclusive to the marriage relationship. It is a social toxin that destroys relationships, steals innocence, erodes compassion, breeds violence, and kills love. How does pornography destroy God’s gift? (NCOSE, 2017)

- **Increased Marital Rape**—Males who use pornography were found to engage in more sexual abuse, stalking, and marital rape than abusers who did not engage in pornography use.
- **Increased Domestic Violence**—The use of pornography by batterers significantly increased a battered woman’s odds of being sexually abused. Pornography use alone increased the odds by a factor of almost 2.
- **Acceptance of Rape Myths**—Women who were exposed to pornography as children were more likely to accept rape myths and to have sexual fantasies that involved rape.
- **Lower Sexual Satisfaction and Sexual Dysfunction**—A study of online sexual activities among males found 20.3% reported that one motive for their porn use was to maintain arousal with their partner. It also found that pornography use was linked to higher sexual desire, but lower overall sexual satisfaction.
- **Negative Body Image and Pressure to Perform Pornographic Acts**—As a result of viewing pornography, women reported lowered body image, criticism from their partners regarding their bodies, and increased pressure to perform acts seen in pornographic films.

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- **Women as Sex Objects**—Internet pornography is shown to normalize the notion that women are sex objects among both adolescent boys and girls.
- **Extramarital Affairs**—A study found that persons who have had an extramarital affair were 3 times more apt to have used Internet pornography.
- **Divorce Rates**—In a nationally representative longitudinal study, researchers found the probability of divorce roughly doubles for men and women who begin viewing pornography.

Those above stats are just the highlights of a comprehensive study that should be alarming to us. Porn is Satan’s strongest weapon to destroy God’s plan for true intimacy in marriage. Pornography’s influence on popular culture has created a crisis in our families that will only deepen unless we return to the biblical principles given to us by the God who created sex!



#### ACTIVITY #2

How do you respond, as a ministry leader, to these questions? Discuss them in your group and then as a larger group share your responses:

- I had premarital sex. Is it too late for me to commit myself exclusively to my future spouse?
- I have committed adultery. Can God forgive me, and can my marriage be saved?
- I am addicted to pornography. What can I do?

### Sex Is a Gift from God

God never intended sex to be debased as we see it today. He designed the gift of sex for committed marriages. A gift? When did God give that gift to us? Let’s go back to the story of creation and look:

“Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So, God created mankind in his own

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(Hebrews 13:4, NIV). These descriptions are far from the message that sex is shameful or dirty!



**ACTIVITY #3**

Discuss these questions in your small group and then share together:

- From whom did you get information on sex education: parents, peers, reading, school or church?
- How or where do you think most young people get their education regarding sexuality today?
- What can we do, as leaders, to assist parents and help them be more comfortable in being the primary educators to their children on sexual education?

**Sex Education to Children**

There is one question that we are frequently asked: At what age should I have “THE TALK” to my child about sex? Our response sometimes causes raised eyebrows as we try to explain that teaching your child about sexuality needs to happen as soon as they are born. Sex education needs to take place in the home, and it needs to take place with you. How do you want your child to learn about sex? From a peer? The media? A photo shown to them by one of their friends? If you want them to learn the values you have established in your home, you need to be the one to have this conversation with them.

At birth? Early childhood? What can you possibly teach about sexuality at that age? Here are a few things that very young children can learn:

- Bath time—Use appropriate names for body parts (such as penis and vagina).
- Storytime—Tell them the story of creation and how God created male and female.
- Potty Training—Point out differences between male/female potty use.
- Dressing up—No one should touch you in places covered by your clothes. Talk about appropriate vs inappropriate touch.

Obviously, the discussions and topics we introduce will get more into detail as your child matures. Having these types of

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conversations with your children when they are still young, in your home, helps them realize this is not a taboo subject and it opens more doors to further conversations.

In terms of having “THE TALK,” one discussion is not enough. Talking about sexuality should be ongoing throughout a child’s development. If you wait until those teenage years to have that discussion you will find it is very awkward. On the other hand, if it has been an ongoing conversation in your home, with the freedom to ask questions, then it is easier to build on that knowledge base as they grow and mature.

Parents and caregivers should help children understand that sexual discussions and questions are a healthy and normal part of life. Children should learn at home that being created as sexual beings is a gift from God, that discussions and questions on sex are welcomed, and that they do not need to fear asking or discussing anything with you as their parent. If adults show shock, disgust, or embarrassment at children's questions, the child receives the negative message: "don't talk to me about that." Thereafter, they probably will not. If they cannot discuss things with you, they will discuss them with others, most likely their peers. Isn't it far better that you are the one to guide this discussion and infuse your spiritual values into the conversation? If a parent or caregiver doesn't know the answer to a child's question, the parent or caregiver should tell the child that they can learn together. Be certain that the doors of communication are open to this topic.

Remember, if you have more than one child, each child will need information consistent with his or her stage of development. A child can only handle the amount of information that he or she can process at that age. Even if a family consists of more than one child, parents and caregivers cannot sit them all down at once and have “the talk.” Each child develops at a different pace and will need specific information at different times. Don’t rush a child with information; listen to her or him. The child can help guide parents or caregivers in knowing the right time to discuss sexual issues. If you have given them the freedom to ask questions, they can help guide you into these conversations as you respond to their questions.

Adults should remember that if they are not comfortable with sex and discussing sexuality, that message will be quickly passed on to children. If adults feel that sex is dirty and not God-given, this too will be communicated. Christian parents

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must put sex in its rightful place within the sanctity of marriage and show children what a wonderful gift God has given to us.

Culture will send messages about sexuality to your child that are not God-ordained and, the truth is that we can't shelter our children from every lewd poster in the mall, every sensual song played in a restaurant, and every image they may see on a peer's phone. As parents, we need to encourage them to show us those things about which they have questions so we can help them develop good discernment. We can take these moments to affirm the basic fact that sexuality is part of God's loving design and remind them that Satan has tried to ruin God's perfect gift to us. These brief messages will be more impactful when offered in a positive and relational manner. Our messages regarding sexuality need to be tied to God's love for us, and how we express our love for Him by keeping His gift in its rightful place - within marriage.

## Wrap-Up

As leaders of Family Ministries, it is paramount for us to focus our families on God's original design for sex. Culture has a very loud voice and we need to make sure that God's voice is heard above the roar of Satan.



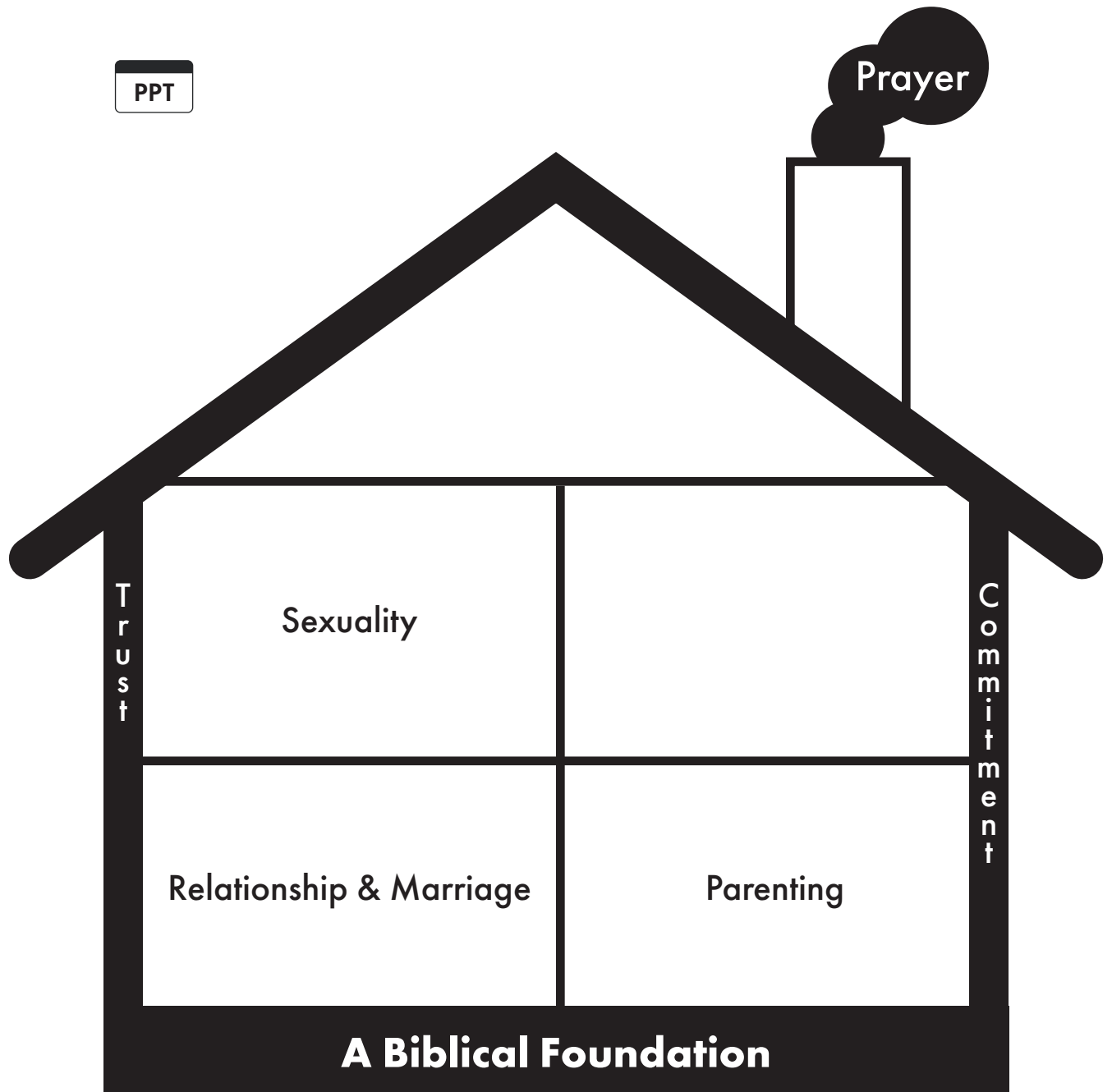
## SUGGESTED CLOSING ACTIVITY

You may do this if time allows. Read Song of Solomon 1 and answer these questions:

1. What image reflects the relationship you and your spouse have? (a) King and Queen? (b) Shepherd and country-side girl? (c) Hero and heroine? (d) Nurse and patient? (e) Father and daughter? (f) Cat and Mouse? (g) Other:
2. Friends play a vital role in the courtship between this couple, as they do in all marriages that succeed. Are you a true friend to couples you know? How so?
3. If you feel comfortable, share some of the conversations about human sexuality you have had with your children.

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# AGING GRACEFULLY

## Presenter Notes



### Scriptural Principle

“Gray hair is a crown of splendor; it is attained in the way of righteousness.” Proverbs 16:31 (NIV)

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### Introduction

Some issues that are related to aging seem a joy to discuss (such as grandparenting). Others, however, such as end-of-life issues or loss and grief we would rather avoid at all costs. However, this need not be the case because talking about these issues, providing resources, and addressing them before the need arises helps one be prepared and face them with reduced anxiety and foreboding.

Perhaps part of the reason that we would rather dismiss these issues is because of the way in which society relates to them. Too many times these issues are not addressed in positive ways that bring to mind the promise of eternity and the message contained in our scripture verse for this chapter: “Gray hair is a crown of splendor; it is attained in the way of righteousness.” Proverbs 16:31 (NIV)



### ACTIVITY #1

Complete the chart below.

PPT

- On the left side of the chart think about the typical grandparent today. What activities do they engage in with their grandchildren? What do all the pictures of grandparents and grandchildren on social media show them doing?
- Now, on the other side, list as many verses in the Bible you can think of that address God’s purpose for grandparents.

Grandparents Today	God's Role for Grandparents	PPT
1.	1.	
2.	2.	
3.	3.	
4.	4.	
5.	5.	

Grandparenting

Do you know how scripture defines the role of a grandparent? The truth is that, when asked, most people are readily able to quote a scripture verse that defines the role of a husband, a wife, and even a child. However, when asked to expound upon the Biblical role of grandparents, the room becomes silent. There is much uncertainty regarding this, and most people think that the Bible is silent; but nothing could be farther from the truth. Actually, the Bible is very clear on this matter and many of us know the verses but have missed the implications for an aging generation.

“Every member of the family is given a God-ordained role which is not interchangeable with other family members” (Mulvihill, 2016, p.11). We can rapidly recall that husbands are to love their wives, wives are to respect their husbands, and children are to obey their parents. However, the Bible is also very clear about the role that a grandparent must play. If you are uncertain as to what this is, keep reading!

In many circles if you ask individuals to name their family members, they will readily list mom, dad, and children. And, if you ask children in pre-school to draw their family, most will not include a grandparent in their drawing, unless they live in the same home. In most cases, the grandparents will not be mentioned or drawn but, instead, are viewed in the role of “extras” to the scene. God, however, does not see grandparents as an insignificant member of the family; it is modern culture that paints a picture of family that is not aligned with God’s portrait. Grandparents are central to God’s family picture, and

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we must align our practices and interactions with our grandchildren to that which God designed.

The truth is that God has defined the role of grandparenting just as clearly as He has the role of other members of the family. Perhaps, we have read it in the Bible many times but have not noticed it. Most of us have read the text in Deuteronomy that has often been referred to as the premier scripture verse on parenting: “Keep the commandments of the LORD your God... Teach them to your children AND your grandchildren” (Deuteronomy 4: 2, 9 NKJV).

While these verses address parents, there is that one small three-letter word that we have all too often missed. Did you happen to notice the word “AND”? We have quoted this verse repeatedly as it relates to the role of parenting; however, the word “AND” connects the same responsibility to grandparents. In other words, my responsibility of passing the torch of faith does not end with my parenting role, but rather, it extends into my role as a grandparent. I need to pass my faith on to my children AND to my grandchildren.

You see, if you read the Bible clearly, you will discover that grandparents are not an “extra” thrown in the scene. Rather, they are an essential part of the picture of family and, they have a very distinct God-ordained role that is not transferrable to any other member of the family.

God’s ideal for grandparents has been marred by a world filled with sin. That ideal has been pushed out of the picture and many have blurred the clarity of the role that grandparents have been called to fill. The culture’s distracting noise screams loudly to grandparents calling them to a life of indulgence with their grandchild while God has given them a much higher calling - that of being disciple makers.

Deuteronomy 4 is not the only scriptural reference regarding the role of a grandparent as scripture is ripe with counsel. Consider these other texts:

- Deuteronomy 6:2-9 (NKJV) Read this entire passage but pay close attention to how it begins and to whom these words are addressed, “that you may fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson.” Did you catch that? This passage is talking to grandparents as it speaks to “you, and your son and your grandson.” This verse once again connects our

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- “We will not hide them from their children,

And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.

And appointed a law in Israel,

That they should make them known to their children;

The children who would be born,

That they may set their hope in God,

But keep His commandments;

A stubborn and rebellious generation,

And whose spirit was not faithful to God.”

It may be easy to look at grandparenting as something that happens at the end of our lives and yet studies indicate that

“significantly longer life expectancies now project you will live over 30% of your life as a grandparent and up to 20% of your life as a great-grandparent” (Grands Matter, p. A10). Take a look at some other statistics about grandparents today: (Grandparent Statistics, 2017)

- Number of grandparents in the United States - 70,000,000
- Percent of U.S. households led by grandparents - 37%
- Percent of grandparents who say they can do a better job caring for grandchildren than they did with their own - 63%
- Percent of people age 65 and over living below the poverty level - 9.5%
- Percent of grandparents that are the primary caregiver to their grandchildren - 13%
- Became grandparents in their 50's - 43%
- Became grandparents in their 40's - 37%
- Average age of becoming a grandparent - 48 years old

Look closely at each statistic. What are the implications for each? Did you notice the fact that 37% of households in the United States are led by grandparents? That statistic should have stood out to you and that one fact alone shows the need for the resource you now hold in your hands. Over one-third of all homes in the United States are headed by a grandparent. Stop for a moment to consider the implications of that. Grandparents, you have the numbers to make a significant difference in the life of children today!

This is not only happening in the United States. Recent research reveals that one-third of Canadians of First Nations origin (which includes North American Indians, Métis, and Inuit) were raising two or more grandchildren. Between 1991 and 2001 there was a 20% increase in the number of Canadian children (under 18) who were living with grandparents with no parent present in the home (Fuller-Thompson, 2005).

We stated in the introduction that it is the parents who hold the rightful place as the number one influencer in their child's life. This was God's plan. At the same time, you can see from this research that there are many homes where grandparents now have moved into that number one slot (read more in our grandparenting book, the chapter entitled, "When Grandpar-

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[illegible]

ent Becomes Parent”). So, if a grandparent becomes parent that means that they assume the number one role as disciple-maker for that child.

You may have also noticed that the average age of becoming a grandparent is 48 years old. At 48 you have many more years yet to live and much more to give in a way to impact the next generation. How are you using these years?



**ACTIVITY #2**

Too many times we, as a church, plan for activities that separate the generations. We have youth activities and senior dinners, just to mention a few. List as many activities as you can think of that a church could plan that would combine the ages/generations. Then, list the benefits from such activities.

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Multi-generational Activities	Benefits
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

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**Multi-Generational Ministry**

The scriptures embrace a multi-generational view of discipleship where faith is passed on from one generation to the next. There is no endpoint and you are a vital part of His plan of discipleship. “Let’s not let cultural ideas and expectations about grandparents push us to the back burner. Don’t follow the short-sighted idea that our retirement entitles us to just relax and enjoy what we have, and we’re relieved of the responsibilities of investing in our grandchildren. And, let’s not buy into the naïve notion that our adult children now have their own families and we are not needed, or we have nothing valuable

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to contribute. It may be natural to feel that way sometimes, but that's clearly inconsistent with God's plan" (Canfield, 2016, A7).

As leaders, it is important to help our older generation realize the high calling God has for them. These years can be some of the most fruitful and rewarding in their life and a multi-generational ministry is vital to God's plan. Our beloved seniors can impact generations to come by fulfilling God's role for grandparents! We have reviewed the scriptural mandate but what does this look like in action? Here are some practical ways that our older generation can engage with the youth in a mutigenerational ministry:

- **Include Them**—Don't forget that the "and" in scripture includes them. Don't be so busy doing the work of God that you omit one of your most important responsibilities. Include the older members in your service and witnessing activities. For example, instead of taking them on an expensive cruise, take them on a mission trip to work side by side with you. Your money and time would be much better spent by allowing our dear patriarchs and matriarchs to come alongside and join in all our service projects and, in return, the payoffs will be "out of this world." Even very young grandchildren can participate with the older generation in age-appropriate service-related projects. Remember, a Christian grandparent must be intentional by including them in their discipleship plan (Deuteronomy 4:9).
- **Tell Them**—Our older generation has a testimony. They have lived a life filled with God's interventions. Have we intentionally given them the time to share that testimony with the youth in the church? Sometimes our personal testimony of Jesus is one of our best kept secrets when it should be the one thing we shout from the mountaintops. There are many moments throughout the day that lends itself to a glance back at ways God has led in your life.

Also, encourage the older generation to be vulnerable by telling the young people the mistakes they have made. "Helping your grandchildren grow in discernment can be accomplished by telling stories about good and bad choices you have made and how they have impacted your life" (Canfield, 2016, p. 24). How can we facilitate the

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Some of us had rather not talk or even think about end of life plans. After all, before we can focus on these, we need to



help to you in filling out these forms and helping you take care of your health and financial decisions, so you and your family have one less thing to worry about.

2. **Writing a Will**—Writing a will demands that we think about the day that we will die and that is not exactly a pleasant topic to dwell on. Perhaps this explains the reason why the majority of Americans do not have a will (SimpleWills, 2015). The actual writing of a will does nothing to hasten the day; however, it does serve to help us prepare for that day and to prayerfully consider what reminders we will leave in our path. The truth is that unless Jesus comes soon, we will all die, and therefore we all must be prepared for that day. Here are some steps to keep in mind regarding your will:

- **Do it Now**—Whether you’ve given it a thought before or not, start writing your will now. Don’t fool yourself into thinking you are too young or too poor to have a will and, do not have the foolish notion that preparing one will hasten your death. It doesn’t matter if you think you’re poor; you can still specify how you want the “little” you have to be distributed. Don’t give room for excuses; each would pale into insignificance when compared with the consequences of not having one. Too many families have endured unnecessary family rifts because there was no recorded will. In your will you may not necessarily leave a lot of money or properties, but you can indicate special mementos that you wish for each person to have.
- **Review it Often**—Even if you have already written one years ago, it may be time to review it. Review it at least once every year, so that you can make adjustments to reflect changes in your family makeup, business, and other things that matter because keeping an outdated will can sometimes be as bad as not having one in the first place.
- **Let Others Know**—You must tell others about your will because only a few things could be more unfortunate than having a will that no one else knows about. This is in no way different from not having a will in the first place - because the consequences are the same. To achieve your objectives for writing a will, you must tell

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your loved ones that it exists, let them know where it is kept, and how they can retrieve it when the time is right.

3. **Retirement**—Retirement can bring about mixed emotions. For many it is something they have looked forward to and planned their whole life. For others, it can create a void that is hard to fill. Issues to consider:
  - **Retirement Income**—Calculate all forms of income and create a budget to guide in expenditures. There are local agencies to assist you in this.
  - **Where will you live?** Will you continue living in your current home, move to a retirement community, or other? Having a plan beforehand decreases anxiety.
4. **Loss/Grief**—Losses are not just the death of loved ones, friends, and acquaintances. The elderly also experiences loss and grief as they begin to have a diminished ability in activities of daily living. This can lead to a loss of a sense of purpose. They struggle with the loss of their loved ones, their home, their possessions, their health, their vocations, not to mention their independence. Here are some things a church can do to help in this area:
  - **Provide Seminars on Elder Care**—Perhaps you can invite professionals (accountants, financial planners) who can help the older members in your church with the financial planning, or ask health professionals (your church may have some of these such as: doctors, nurses, optometrists, dentists), who can perform some simple tests and refer those in need for further evaluation and treatment, or just to talk to them and ascertain what their needs might be.
  - **Provide Loss/Grief Seminars**—Local experts (some may be members of your congregation such as: counselors, psychologists, social workers) can come in to conduct seminars to assist in this area.
  - **Compile a list of Local Grief Counselors**—This is a great resource to have but be sure to compile it now so that it's completed and accessible when needed. You may include agencies as well as individual professionals. Be certain that any on your list offer Biblically based counseling.

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5. **Legacy**—What legacy will you leave behind? No, we are not referring to things written in your will. We are taking about a lasting legacy that is far more important than any monetary thing you could leave. Remember:

- Your legacy will remain for generations to come as the faith torch is passed on from generation to generation.
- Why not initiate a local grandparenting club to educate and empower this generation to have a multi-generational ministry?



### SUGGESTED CLOSING ACTIVITY

You may do this if time allows. Ask those in attendance to answer these questions:

1. What is one of your favorite memories of your grandparents?
2. If your grandparents are (or were) alive today, what could you do to help them in a very practical way?
3. If you have grandchildren, what do you do to teach them about God?
4. How do you support your children as they show God to your grandchildren?

### Wrap-Up

It is especially awe inspiring when we consider the fact that the influence of our aging population will not only impact children and grandchildren but has the potential to influence generations to come. “As we become more intentional in the spiritual grandparenting of our own kids, we think about the generations to come - the children we will never hold, but who will have our eyes, or our sense of humor, or a natural openness to wonder and awe, or our stubbornness and willfulness. Though gone, we will touch them through the links of the chain of faith from our children to our grandchildren and to those who follow” (Bell, 2016, p. 49).

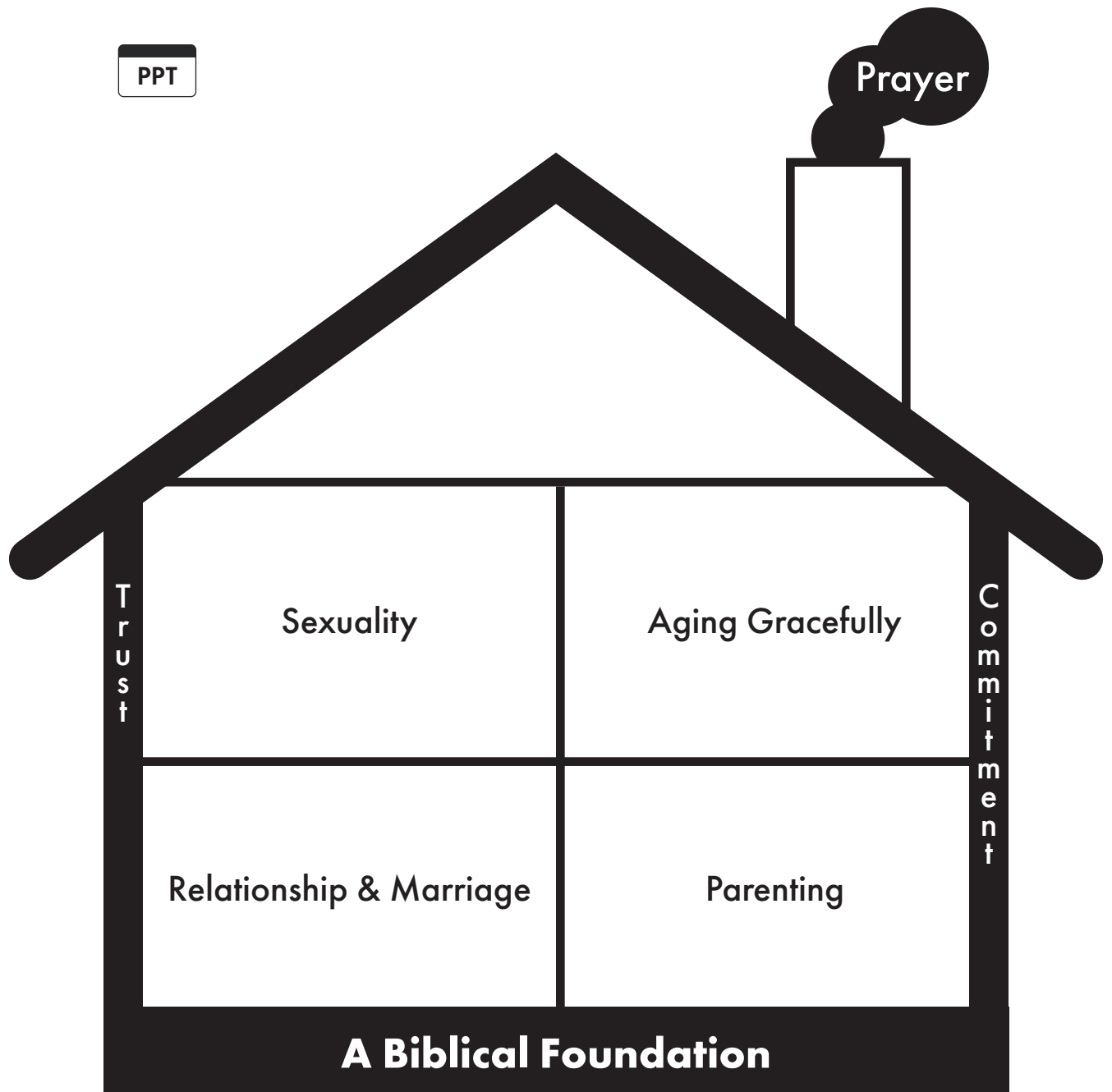
As a church family, let’s be certain to value one of the greatest gifts that we have sitting in our pews - our older generation. Let’s educate, equip, and empower them to fulfill God’s design as they pass on a lasting legacy of faith for generations to come.

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# HOW TO HAVE EFFECTIVE FAMILY MINISTRIES AT THE LOCAL CHURCH



## Scriptural Principle

“But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.” 1 Corinthians 14:40 (NIV)

## Introduction

You are involved in this training because you have been called to serve as a leader in Family Ministries in your local church. Perhaps you are new to this position and need to know how to go about having an effective ministry in your church. The good news is that no experience is necessary. All you need is a willing heart, a passion to make a difference, and a willingness to be used by God.

In addition to this curriculum, there are two additional resources that will help you begin your ministry and we want to take a moment to highlight these:

1. **Family Ministries Quick Start Guide**—This is a very compact resource that will break down your job as Family Ministries leader into simple steps to follow (Lee, W. 2017).
2. **Family Ministries Handbook**—The Family Ministries Handbook outlines the theoretical and philosophical frameworks for an effective ministry. You will find additional advice on committees and planning, sample survey forms, and a helpful family profile for your church. This how-to guide moves quickly into practical suggestions on how family ministries can become an integral part of church life (Johnson, A. 2003).

Our scripture verse for this chapter reminds us of a very important principle: “But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way” 1 Corinthians 14:40 (NIV). What does that have to do with ensuring that we have an effective family ministries program? Well, it reminds us to be faithful to the responsibility we have been asked to fulfill when it comes to things such as budgeting, planning, meeting the needs of our congregation and community, organizing, marketing, implementing, and follow-up. All these things work together to ensure a successful family ministries program at the local church

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level. In other words, God calls us to be faithful to the ministry opportunity with which He has entrusted us.

**Committee/Organization**

The good news is that you do not have to do all of this alone because an effective family ministries program requires a leadership team that is committed to this effort for a sustained period of time (for several years if necessary). The most important aspect of this team is the Family Ministries Leader for the local church. This individual needs to be a good communicator, with keen interest in human relationships, as well as having an ability to organize.

Who should be part of the Family Ministries leadership team or committee? Depending on the leadership in your church, the family ministries committee could include the following individuals:

- The Family Ministries Leader
- Sabbath School Superintendent
- Home and School Leader
- Personal Ministries Leader
- Community Services Leader
- Men’s Ministries Leader
- Singles’ Ministries Leader
- Women’s Ministries Leader
- At least one Married Couple
- At least one Divorced Person
- Multi-generational Representation

This committee has the responsibility to organize and plan ministry events for the church calendar year. Working with a team of committed people will enhance this ministry, make it so many share the load, and having ministry leaders from various ministries will help to make sure that as many events in your church as possible are multigenerational.

**What Your Job is and What it is Not**

It is very critical that we understand an important point. If you are not a trained and licensed counselor, then you should not assume that role. Instead, it is your role to be a resource person to provide information on professionals and

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- Never neglect to refer someone to a professional. Sometimes others think that seeking help is a sign of weakness. On the contrary, we need to help people understand that it is a sign of strength and we should be as willing to seek professional services such as mental health counseling as we are to go to a dentist for a tooth-ache.
- Develop a list of qualified Christian counselors in your community as a resource to give to those who may need it.
- Develop a list of other social service agencies/aid in your local community such as: homeless shelters, alcoholics anonymous, unemployment office, abuse hotlines, etc.



## ACTIVITY #1

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Remember, it's better to have them now than to wait until a crisis develops. Then, think of places that may be helpful to assist you as you put that information together. Use the chart below.

Resource List	Where Could I Begin?	PPT
Christian Counselors	<a href="https://www.christiancounselordirectory.com/">https://www.christiancounselordirectory.com/</a> Enter your zip code and it will generate a list that you could copy and print out, if desired.	
Suicide Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/">https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/</a></li> <li>• 1-800-273-TALK (8255)</li> </ul>	
Domestic Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.thehotline.org/help/">https://www.thehotline.org/help/</a></li> <li>• 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) This telephone number could be placed on small take home cards in women's bathrooms. The website also has some valuable resource information.</li> </ul>	
Substance Abuse/Other Addictions	<a href="https://americanaddictioncenters.org/">https://americanaddictioncenters.org/</a>	
General Help Social Services	<a href="https://www.hhs.gov/programs/social-services/index.html">https://www.hhs.gov/programs/social-services/index.html</a> This website will assist in services available by state.	

Define the Needs in Your Congregation and Community

What kinds of families comprise your church? This will be a deciding factor to guide the types of programs and events you offer in your church. For example, if your church is composed of many young families, a focus on parenting or marriage may be needed. If your church has a lot of older members, then you may concentrate on offering the type of help and resources they would find most useful, such as grandparenting classes or classes on preparing for retirement. In other words, begin where the greatest need is.

You may have a general impression of what the needs are based on what you superficially notice in church on Sabbath morning. Such a general impression, however, needs to be sharpened by more accurate research. A family life profile distributed to the members of your congregation can be a good place to start. It should be distributed in church and filled out on the spot and returned. If you distribute them at church and ask them to complete them at home and bring them back next week you may only receive a handful, if any at all. So, pass them out, allow a few minutes to complete, and take up right away. When completed, the surveys should give you a fairly accurate picture of the composition of families in your active membership. A sample family ministries survey for your church family is included at the end of this chapter.

In addition to developing a family ministries profile of your congregation, you can also use direct feedback from experts, church families, and your family ministries committee to pinpoint needs. All of this information will guide your planning.

Keep in mind that family ministries is not only for members of your church. It can also be evangelistic, ministering to the needs of your neighbors and friends who are not church members. Later on, you may wish to survey your community to determine their interests and needs regarding family issues. A community family ministries survey for assessing family needs/interests of the community around the church is also found at the end of this chapter. Notice that we have intentionally made it very short, concise, and non-invasive in order to get more to participate.

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## Planning

The planning process can begin after you have identified some definite target audiences. In addition to that, there are other things you need to consider before you go ahead and try to implement any plan. Planning must include:

- Target Audience—Who do I want to reach? Is it for a certain demographic in the church or will the community be invited?
- Nature of the Program—Is it a seminar, a webinar, a picnic, etc.?
- Time Frame for the Program—Will it be an afternoon or one hour?
- Specific Skills, Experiences and Information to be Communicated—What is the objective?
- Your Ability to Find Leaders and Helpers—Will you have the support you need to do this?
- Locating or Generating Material & Resources Needed—What materials will you need to prepare ahead of time? (Audio-visuals, packaged programs, handouts, etc.)
- Decide on the Time, Place, Fees and other Details—Day, time, venue, cost, etc.

## Marketing

No matter how well your program meets the needs of your target audience, it will do no good if nobody comes! And, they won't come if they don't hear about it. Here are some ideas for advertising your Family Ministries events:

- Person-to-person Invitations (friends inviting friends)
- Direct Mail
- Signs, Posters, Fliers, and Brochures
- News Releases to Print and Broadcast Media (free publicity)
- Paid Advertising
- Social Media
- Website

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With the support of the church board, assistance from your committee, and prayer, you may implement your plan. Utilize all these people to help you carry out the plan. It will be easier on you and allow more people to take ownership and understand the value of family ministries programs and events in the local church.

It is also important to do a good follow-up and make contact with those who attended the event to thank them for participating and to check if you can be of any additional service to them. This is especially important for community members as you want to maintain a connection with them and continue to invite them to future events.



## ACTIVITY #2

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OK, let's pretend you have family ministries event in your church. Pretend that the group at your table comprises the family ministries committee in your church. Work together as a group to think through these steps. The purpose of this exercise is to serve as a practice for future programs/events.

	Details	Person or Persons Responsible
Event Title/Description		
Targeted Audience		
Date/ Time of Event (Start & End Time)		
Registration Required? Cost to Attend? If so: What is the cost? How will you manage registration?		
Materials Needed for the Activity		
Meal/Snacks		
Technology Needs		
Key Presenter		
Marketing Methods to be Used		
Ways Event will be Evaluated		
Follow-up Activities		

Wrap-Up

Being a family ministries leader is a sacred calling. If God has given you a passion for this ministry then He will bless your efforts. Allow Him to guide you as you move forward in your plans to incorporate this important ministry in your church plans.

May God bless you abundantly as you seek to build your home for hope and wholeness on a strong foundation that will withstand the storms of life and then share those same principles to strengthen other families in your church and community thus, putting family and evangelism together side by side!



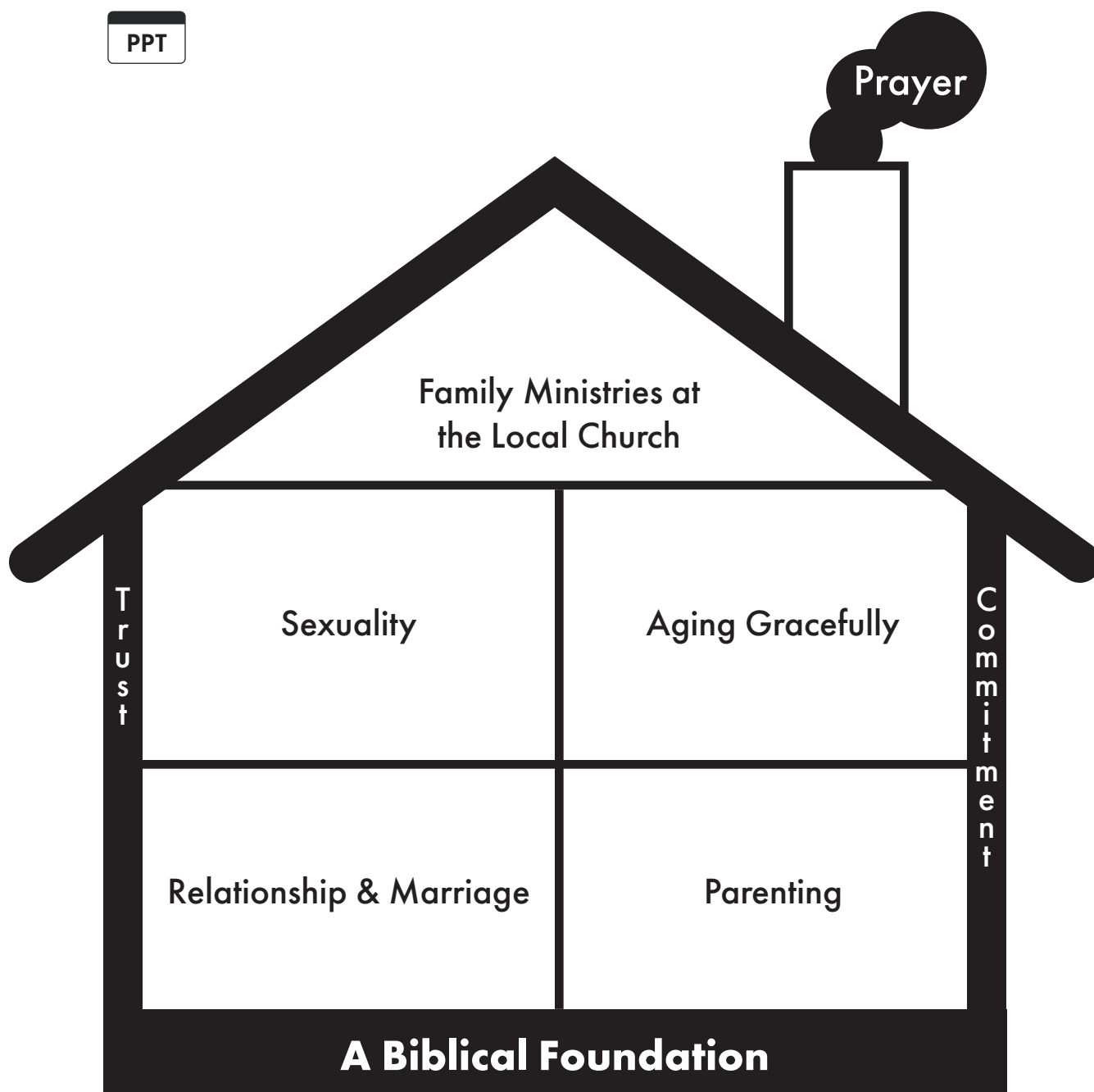
SUGGESTED CLOSING ACTIVITY

As we close this training program, we want you to pause and write one new thing you have learned from each of the six modules. What principle can you apply to your life? What principle can you apply to your ministry to families?

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	What principle can you apply to your life?	What principle can you apply to your ministry to families?
Modules 1		
Modules 2		
Modules 3		
Modules 4		
Modules 5		
Modules 6		



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# FAMILY MINISTRIES CHURCH SURVEY

Greetings from the Family Ministries Department in your church! Our local church is willing to host some events and in order to be most effective, we are surveying you in order to determine how to best meet the needs of our church family. Please help us by taking a moment to answer these questions. Please know that all questions are voluntary and only serve to help us cater our programs to your needs.

1. Your age group: ☐ 18-30 ☐ 31-40 ☐ 41-50 ☐ 51-60 ☐ 61-70 ☐ 71+

2. Members in your Household:

Name	Birthday	Relationship
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

3. From the topics below, please select as many as you like that would be of interest to you. Place a check in front of each.

<input type="checkbox"/> Preparation for marriage	<input type="checkbox"/> Worship and devotional life	<input type="checkbox"/> Family finance
<input type="checkbox"/> Communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Discipline in the home	<input type="checkbox"/> Single adult living
<input type="checkbox"/> Parenting teenagers	<input type="checkbox"/> Improving self-worth	<input type="checkbox"/> Preparation for childbirth
<input type="checkbox"/> Resolving anger and conflict	<input type="checkbox"/> Divorce recovery	<input type="checkbox"/> Television and media
<input type="checkbox"/> Single parenting	<input type="checkbox"/> Preparation for retirement	<input type="checkbox"/> Sexuality
<input type="checkbox"/> Chemical dependency issues	<input type="checkbox"/> Enriching your marriage	<input type="checkbox"/> Blended families
<input type="checkbox"/> Grief recovery	<input type="checkbox"/> Death and dying	<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding temperaments
<input type="checkbox"/> Coping with widowhood	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	

4. What day of the week and time of day is best for you to attend a 1 1/2-2 hour program on one of the above topics? Circle all days/times below that would be convenient.

Which day/days? ☐ Sunday ☐ Monday ☐ Tuesday ☐ Wednesday  
☐ Thursday ☐ Friday ☐ Saturday

What times of day? ☐ Morning ☐ Afternoon ☐ Evening

5. I am interested in assisting the Family Ministries Department by:

<input type="checkbox"/> Telephoning as needed	<input type="checkbox"/> Participating in planning sessions
<input type="checkbox"/> Providing transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Preparation for events
<input type="checkbox"/> Help with meals/refreshments	<input type="checkbox"/> Child-care
<input type="checkbox"/> Advertising	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Being a Presenter in _____	

# FAMILY MINISTRIES COMMUNITY SURVEY

Greetings! Our local church is willing to host some community events and in order to be most effective, we are surveying our neighbors in order to determine how to best meet the needs in our community. Please help us by taking a moment to answer these questions. Please know that all questions are voluntary and only serve to help us cater our programs to community needs.

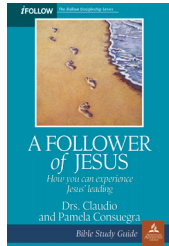
1. Your age group: ☐ 18–30 ☐ 31–40 ☐ 41–50 ☐ 51–60 ☐ 61–70 ☐ 71+
2. From the topics below, please select as many as you like that would be of interest to you. Place a check in front of each.  

<input type="checkbox"/> Preparation for marriage	<input type="checkbox"/> Worship and devotional life	<input type="checkbox"/> Family finance
<input type="checkbox"/> Communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Discipline in the home	<input type="checkbox"/> Single adult living
<input type="checkbox"/> Parenting teenagers	<input type="checkbox"/> Improving self-worth	<input type="checkbox"/> Preparation for childbirth
<input type="checkbox"/> Resolving anger and conflict	<input type="checkbox"/> Divorce recovery	<input type="checkbox"/> Television and media
<input type="checkbox"/> Single parenting	<input type="checkbox"/> Preparation for retirement	<input type="checkbox"/> Sexuality
<input type="checkbox"/> Chemical dependency issues	<input type="checkbox"/> Enriching your marriage	<input type="checkbox"/> Blended families
<input type="checkbox"/> Grief recovery	<input type="checkbox"/> Death and dying	<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding temperament
<input type="checkbox"/> Coping with widowhood	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	
3. What day of the week and time of day is best for you to attend a 1-1/2–2 hour program on one of the above topics? Circle all days/times that would be convenient.  
Which day/days? ☐ Sunday ☐ Monday ☐ Tuesday ☐ Wednesday  
☐ Thursday ☐ Friday ☐ Saturday  
What times of day? ☐ Morning ☐ Afternoon ☐ Evening

# ADDITIONAL BOOKS BY DRS. CLAUDIO AND PAMELA CONSUEGRA

*S=Also Available in Spanish | F=Also Available in French*

## A Follower of Jesus [S]



Following Jesus is like taking a journey. Members become discouraged. Some slip and fall and need help. There are dangerous places that require a helping hand. Often those who feel alone and without guidance quietly disappear. A Follower of Jesus looks at six ways Jesus established and grew His disciples. Whether you are a new member or someone who was baptized years ago, A Follower of Jesus will help you discover that Christ's way of growing disciples will strongly enhance your journey to heaven. About the Authors Claudio Consuegra and his wife Pamela are directors of Family Ministries for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. Claudio served as Ministerial, Evangelism, Communication, Ethnic Ministries and Family Ministries director as well as the Vice President for Administration for the Minnesota Conference. For three years he and Pamela hosted a national call-in talk show on LifeTalk Radio. He and Pamela have been married for more than 31 years and have two daughters. Paperback. 84 pages. Copyright 2013. Part of the iFollow series.

## Building Homes of Hope and Wholeness [S, F]



This resource creates the foundation for a healthy Family Ministry in your local church. Building on a Biblical foundation and based on research Claudio and Pamela address the subjects: Building on a Firm Foundation, Relationship and Marriage, Parenting, Sexuality, Aging Gracefully and How to Have Effective Family Ministries at the Local Church. Each chapter includes individual and group activities along with additional resources for further study. Copyright 2020

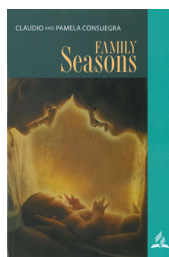
## Family Faith Devotional



Family Faith is a journey through God's Word that uncovers beautiful, gemlike truths that families will be able to apply to living life in today's crazy, busy, and sometimes overwhelming world. King Solomon was right when he said that there is nothing new under the sun. Everything we need to know about how to raise strong, resilient families can be found in the Bible. Through the stories of these ordinary people who, just like us, faced challenges and triumphs, tears and laughter, exuberance and exhaustion, we will learn how to honor God in our homes. Claudio and Pamela Consuegra are the directors of the Family Ministries Department of the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They have a rich background in family ministries, having worked as a husband-and-wife team in numerous conferences; hosted a live call-in show for LifeTalk Radio for three years; and authored numerous journal articles as well as several books. They are passionate about building strong, healthy marriages and families for God's kingdom. Hardcover. Copyright 2016. 392 pages.



## Family Seasons [S, F]



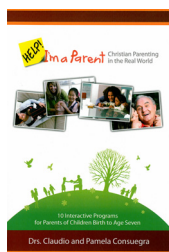
The Bible is a book of relationships. God created us to be in relationship with others. That's why, when God created Adam, He said, "It is not good that man should be alone" (Gen.2:18, NKJV). In Adam's case, God created an equal partner, Eve, to be his companion. Some of us may never get married, but still need to have others around us to help us, offer encouragement, and for us to reciprocate. In fact, the church family plays a very important role in the life of those who are not married. We are their family and we must surround them with the love and encouragement they need. Ellen White paints a simple picture of what happens in the family and in the church. "Picture a large circle, from the edge of which are many lines all running to the center. The nearer these lines approach the center, the nearer they are to one another. Thus it is in the Christian life. The closer we come to Christ, the nearer we shall be to one another. God is glorified as His people unite in harmonious action." (Adventist Home, p. 179) We need each other as we journey through the seasons of our life. As we transition out of the bleak, cold of winter into the flowery spring, through the warmth of summer to the chill of autumn, the transitions may be difficult, even painful at times, very joyful at others, but traveling together makes it much easier. In this book, we will explore the family seasons to see how sin derailed God's plan for our lives and what He has in mind for us until He makes all things very good again. Paperback. Copyright 2018. 128 pages.

## Grandparenting: Giving your grandchildren a GRAND view of God [S, F]



God's ideal for grandparents has been marred by a world filled with sin. His original plan has been pushed out of the picture and society has blurred the clarity of the role that we, as grandparents, have been called to fill. The culture's distracting noise screams loudly to grandparents, calling them to a life of indulgence with their grandchild while God has given them a much higher calling – that of being disciple-makers. It's time we understand that we are a vital part of fulfilling the gospel commission as we have been God-ordained to give our grandchildren a GRAND view of God! This resource is filled with research, practical ideas, and discussion questions that may be used by individuals or small groups to explore their God-given role of grandparenting. Paperback. Copyright 2018.

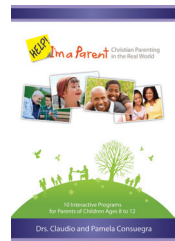
## Help! I'm a Parent (Birth-7) [S, F]



In a national survey of the state of families in America (Bowman, 2012), parents reportedly believe that raising children today is more complicated than it used to be. Along with that, most perceived that the quality of American family life was declining. In addition, 55% of the parents surveyed expressed a concern that they were not doing a very good job of parenting. In essence, the study concluded that, "for today's mothers and fathers, there is no clear map that charts the path for nurturing the next generation of adults" (Bowman, 2012, page 10). We bring you good news. There is a map! The map that charts the path of parenting for us is the Word of God. Scripture's principles for parenting are timeless. Help! I'm a Parent: Christian Parenting in the Real World will inspire and encourage parents, grandparents, and caregivers on your journey as disciple-makers of your children. It addresses common challenges experienced by parents of children from birth through age seven. Topics include how to handle discipline, planning family worship, teaching healthy habits, and more. This resource is ideal

for use individually, as a couple, or in a group meeting in the home, church, or at a local church school. Journey with authors Pamela and Claudio Consuegra as they explore the God-given role of parenting. You will be motivated to take up this exciting challenge and experience the blessings of parenthood. Paperback. Copyright 2014.

## Help! I'm a Parent (8-12) [S, F]



This kit includes everything you need to lead a group through Help! I'm a Parent for parents of kids ages 8-12. This resource is ideal for use individually, as a couple, or in a group meeting in the home, church, or at a local church school. Kit includes: Instructions for sharing this parenting seminar with your church and community Two copies of the Help! I'm a Parent book Two-DVD set featuring 10 30-minute segments Lapel pin And more!

Journey with authors Pamela and Claudio Consuegra as they explore the God-given role of parenting. You will be motivated to take up this exciting challenge and experience the blessings of parenthood. Copyright 2016.

## Help! I'm a Parent (13-18) [S, F]



In a national survey of the state of families in America (Bowman, 2012), parents reportedly believe that raising children today is more complicated than it used to be. Along with that, most perceived that the quality of American family life was declining. In addition, 55% of the parents surveyed expressed a concern that they were not doing a very good job of parenting. In essence, the study concluded that, “for today’s mothers and fathers, there is no clear map that charts the path for nurturing the next generation of adults”

(Bowman, 2012, page 10). We bring you good news. There is a map! The map that charts the path of parenting for us is the Word of God. Scripture’s principles for parenting are timeless. Help! I’m a Parent will inspire and encourage parents, grandparents, and caregivers on your journey as disciple-makers of your children. It addresses common challenges experienced by parents of children from ages 13 to 18. Topics include disconnecting in order to connect, teen mental health, fostering independence, and more. This resource is ideal for use individually, as a couple, or in a group meeting in the home, church, or at a local church school. This parenting resource includes a two-DVD set featuring 10 30-minute segments for each chapter in this resource. Journey with authors Pamela and Claudio Consuegra as they explore the God-given role of parenting. You will be motivated to take up this exciting challenge and experience the blessings of parenthood. Copyright 2018. Includes two copies of the book Help! I’m a Parent for pages of kids ages 13-18, leader’s guide, DVD, lapel pin, order form, and postcard.

## Help! I'm a Parent (Devotional)



Being a parent today is one of life’s greatest challenges but also a sacred calling. It is awesome to think that God chose you to partner with Him in molding and shaping the character of your children and leading them to become disciples of Jesus Christ. It is one of the most important roles you will ever play! This parenting devotional weaves the Word of God with practical applications to the challenges today’s parents face. Whether you are married or single, it is my prayer that the selections in this devotional will provide you

with a daily dose of encouraging insights and spiritual wisdom. Paperback. 400 pages. Copyright 2014.

## **Making Jesus My Best Friend: Baptismal Preparation Guide for Children ages 8-12 [S]**



This baptismal study guide will prepare children ages 8-10 for a wonderful walk with Jesus. It offers lessons with activities that parents and children can enjoy together such as fill-in-the-blank, word games, and Bible crossword puzzles. Authors Claudio and Pamela Consuegra use simple but effective object lessons from everyday life to explain basic doctrines such as the gospel, Sabbath, second coming, tithing, diet, dress, death, judgment, the gift of prophecy, and baptism.

Each of the 10 lessons begins with a story followed by questions, activities, and prayer. Paperback. 95 pages. Copyright 2005.

## **Welcome to the Family [S, F]**



Research shows that between 30 and 50 percent of new members who are baptized do not stick to the church. They fall away. Sometimes we notice only after it has been several months or even years. What happened to them? Where did they go? Why did they leave? And, most importantly, what could we have done to help them stay connected to God's family? Welcome to the Family will help you integrate newly baptized members into the local congregation. It involves inviting the entire church, including new members, to attend one program per week over a period of six

weeks. These sessions will work like glue to bond people to the church. Each two-hour program begins with a fellowship meal and music, followed by a time of learning about health, spiritual and church dynamics, and, most importantly, family and relationship issues. Reproducible handouts for each session are included in this manual. Sessions include: Communication Conflict Resolution Love Works Parenting Growing in Christ Celebrating Your Church Family Improve new member retention by hosting a Welcome to the Family program in your church and helping all members build friendships, strengthen family bonds, and improve their relationships. Paperback. Copyright 2015. Includes CD with PowerPoint presentations.

**A copy of the certificate is available as a fillable PDF in the USB.**

## CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

# Building Homes of Hope and Wholeness

Family Ministries Training Program for Local Church Leaders



Conference Family Ministry Director



FAMILY MINISTRIES  
Seventh-day Adventist Church  
NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

Conference President



This curriculum was created to train Family Ministries leaders in the local church. The Leader's Guide includes a Scripture principle, opening activity, information on the subject for that module, PowerPoint slides to accompany the presentation, and group activities for each of the six modules included in the curriculum.

The Participant Guide is available from [AdventSource.org](http://AdventSource.org).

