ONE

Time for Family

Gather and Get Acquainted

At the group's first meeting, an ice-breaker or get-to-know-you game would be appropriate. For intergenerational gathering ideas, try Kathleen O'Connell Chesto's book, *Rituals and Icebreakers*, (Liguori Publications), or visit www.cfm.org for more suggestions.

OPENING PRAYER

*God, our loving creator and redeemer,*
*fill our hearts with the life-giving,*
*joy-giving, peace-giving Spirit of the risen Jesus.*
*In the power of the Spirit may we praise you now with our lips*
*and all the day long with our lives.*

—Donal Harrington & Julie Kavanaugh
*Prayer for Parish Groups*

Scripture Reflection

A reading from the Book of Genesis.

God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in
our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them....

God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

—Genesis 1: 25-27, 31-2:1-3

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it.

When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him. After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples; and they remained there a few days.

—John 2:1-12

—In the creation story, how does God set the pace for the way that you should use your time?

—What does the Gospel reading tell about Jesus’ priorities?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

There are 24 hours in a day and 168 hours in a week. They are given to us to use as we choose. Why do we feel compelled to fill every waking hour with activity? Eventually, there is too much work, too many involvements, too many activities, too much consumption and too little leisure, too little time to smell the flowers, too little time for family and friends. This hyper activity consumes most of our time and we have so little left over time to give to God and ourselves. As if our days aren’t full enough, we feel the need for more activities for ourselves and for our children. We are tired and rushed, and meet ourselves coming and going. Quality family time is a rare luxury. Even the family dinner table has become a casualty. Some families’ only daily meal
together is fast food, eaten in the car, while racing to the next event.

—Gary and Kay Aitchison
Past Executive Directors, CFM-USA
from the speech “Get Off the Merry-Go-Round”
February 14, 2005

Jesus understood the need to slip away. He was busy teaching God’s word, loving others, traveling, healing, and meeting constant demands for his attention. Yet he rested when needed, even on a boat amid a raging storm. Jesus spent time alone with God, and found time to enjoy celebrations with friends and family as he did at the wedding at Cana.

—Kathryn Lay
“How to Take the Slow Lane”
Catholic Digest, January 2003

There are many reasons for the hectic pace of family life today. Part of the current frenzy is fueled by the large number of choices available to children, many of which didn’t exist 20 years ago. In addition anxious parents are worried that without a laundry list of extracurricular activities, their children will be left behind. As a result, swing sets, jungle gyms, and sandboxes once filled with laughing children sit empty as children are carpooled from one organized activity to the next.

—Jacqueline Duda
“When Kids Have too Much to Do”
Together in Christ, Fall 2002

Our attitudes and perceptions determine how we prioritize our life. In order to keep our day balanced and wholesome, we must take charge of our decisions about time and determine what is important. At the end of our life will we really care about all the hours we worked, all the com-
mittees we sat on, or even all the money we accumulated? Or will we wish we had spent more time laughing, talking to loved ones, relaxing, and filling our hearts and souls with life-giving moments.

—Anne Bryan Smollin
God Knows You’re Stressed

Observe

1. Examine how you spend your time—your job, hobbies, recreation, cooking, cleaning, chores—everything that goes into your day. What actually consumes most of your time?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Estimated Time Spent in Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sleeping</td>
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<td>Parenting/childcare/children’s activities</td>
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<td>Personal care/fitness</td>
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<td>Hobbies/leisure</td>
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<td>Prayer/worship</td>
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<td>Personal time</td>
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<td>Couple time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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</tbody>
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Copyright Christian Family Movement USA 2006
2. Analyze your use of time. On what activities, relationships, and pursuits do you spend the most time? The least time?

3. Which of these enhance your life? Which enhance your family life?

Judge
1. Who gets your prime time? Your left over time?
2. Is your family life balanced? Or is it out of control? Explain.
3. How does your use of time indicate your priorities?
4. How might a simpler lifestyle benefit your family?
5. How do you make time in your day for God? Your partner? Your family? Yourself?

Act
1. Choose one activity each week from the “Family Fun & Making Memories” list (below) to do with your family.
2. Share more family fun ideas with CFM-USA at office@cfm.org or act-editor@cfm.org. Visit www.cfm.org for more memory making activities.
3. Have a family meeting and delete any unnecessary activities from the calendar.
4. Resolve to have at least 1 meal a day together as a family. Evaluate the results at a family meeting.
5. Make Sunday a day of rest, prayer, and leisure. No work. Do something with your family that will create a memory.

Look Ahead to Next Meeting
Read the Observe section for the next chapter aloud. Decide on the location and date for the next meeting.

Be sure everyone has the contact information for those who are hosting the next meeting.

1. Date ____________________________
2. Time ____________________________
3. Place ____________________________
4. Phone or e-mail host if you cannot attend.

CLOSING PRAYER

O God, you constantly try to get my attention. You stir and call in the most unlikely places of my life—people and situations that I dismiss as not being able to contain your presence. You beckon me to those corners of my inner being where I’ve yet to discover you. Open me so that I will not miss your presence today. Help me to learn how to “be” and to let go of my need to be swallowed in activity. —Joyce Rupp

The Cup of Our Life

FAMILY FUN AND MAKING MEMORIES

1. Visit the library and check out a chapter book. Read a chapter with your family each night.
2. Paint a picture, a mural or a room.
3. Have a taffy pull. Find a recipe on the Internet.
4. Set up a table in the family room. Have a game night or tournament.
5. Invent a recipe.
6. Take a nature hike. Collect seeds and leaves to make into a collage.
7. Organize a family bike ride.
8. Learn a new card game and teach it to your family. Have fun!
9. Cook dinner as a family; everyone prepare a different dish.
10. Organize a neighborhood clean up.
11. Volunteer to work for a community organization or charity.
12. Start a family diary or journal. Record important events in the life of your family.
13. Offer to baby-sit for new parents so that they can have a night out.
15. Ask your grandparents to tell the story of their lives and the lives of their parents and grandparents.
16. Play an outdoor game such as horseshoes, badminton, tennis, or croquet.
17. Clean out your closets. Donate your surplus to a local charity or someone in need.
18. Invite a new neighbor or lonely person to dinner.
19. Go camping (even if it is in your backyard).
20. Write a letter or send a card to your Godparents.
Gather

OPENING PRAYER

Song suggestion: Lead Me, Guide Me, Traditional African American hymn.

Father, You called us to found our family together.
Give us the grace to animate it with Your love.
May our family always comfort those who live in it
And welcome those who enter it.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

—Pope John Paul II

Report on Actions

Scripture Reflection

A reading from the letter to the Ephesians.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother"—this is the first commandment with a promise: "so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." And, fathers, do not pro-
Intentional Christian Families

voice your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
—Ephesians 6:1-4

A reading from the letter to Titus.

I left you behind in Crete for this reason, that you should put in order what remained to be done, and should appoint elders in every town, as I directed you: someone who is blameless, married only once, whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery and not rebellious. For a bishop, as God’s steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled. He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it.
—Titus 1:5-8

—What do parents do that can be counterproductive to bringing up children to be good Christians?
—How is a father like a bishop? How is a mother like a bishop?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

Pope John Paul I was, for a brief moment, our pastoral leader. In one of his few public speeches he chose to talk on family life.

The Christian family is so important, and its role so basic in transforming the world and in building up the kingdom of God, that the Council called it a “domestic church.” Let us

never grow tired of proclaiming the family as a community of love.
—Pope John Paul I

Jean Clarke identifies four parenting styles: Nurturing, Marshmallowing, Structuring, and Criticizing. Nurturing and Structuring are two important tasks that affirm the child. Marshmallowing and Criticizing negate the child.

Example:
Situation—11-year-old daughter says, “I want to stay overnight with my girlfriend. Her parents are out of town, but her 16-year-old brother will be there.”

• Nurturing—“I know you want to have fun with your friend. She can come here for the night.”

• Marshmallowing—“Well, I don’t think you should, but I guess you can just this once.”

• Structuring—“No, you cannot stay overnight unless her parents are home.”

• Criticizing—“Of course you can’t go! What kind of parents do you think we are!”

—Jean Ilsey Clarke
Self-Esteem: A Family Affair

In today’s society, children have fewer opportunities to learn responsibility and motivation. We no longer “need” children as important contributors to economic survival. Instead children are given too much in the name of love without any effort or investment on their part, or skill training is simply neglected because of busy life schedules or a lack of understanding of how important it is for children to contribute....
Children do not develop responsibility when parents and teachers are too strict and controlling, nor do they develop responsibility when parents and teachers are permissive. Children learn responsibility when they have opportunities to learn in an atmosphere of kindness, firmness, dignity, and respect.

—Jane Nelson

Positive Discipline

A CFM member tells an anecdote related to the “child-centeredness” of one family. A priest was invited to a family home for dinner. All during the dinner, one of the children kept demanding attention, acting up, not helping set or clear the table, and the parents did little to contain or re-direct the child. At the end of the meal, the priest asked the little boy, “Johnny, may I please be excused?” The parents were taken off guard and asked the priest, what he meant. He explained that since Johnny seemed to be the one in charge, it was only appropriate to ask him to be excused.

—Margie Murchan
San Jose, CA
CFM-USA

Observe
1. Identify some examples of firmness and permissiveness in family discipline.
2. Tell of a time you learned responsibility as a child.
3. How are decisions made in your family now?
4. What values of family life do you consider non-negotiable?

Judge
1. How do parents serve as “stewards” of their families? What are the responsibilities of children?
2. How does proper exercise of parental authority encourage maturing?
3. How can a family respond when a member will not accept its rules?
4. How can the church community assist parents in providing appropriate structure and nurturing at home?

Act
1. Have a family meeting (see below).
2. Create a family mission statement. Have everyone contribute in writing down what the family believes in and what its goals and values are.
3. Study the Letter to Titus or the Letter to the Ephesians (Chapter 6) to learn more about respectful Christian relationships.
4. Invite a child development specialist or family therapist to speak at your next CFM meeting on the topic of affirmative communication, active listening, or conflict resolution in the family. Consider opening up the meeting to the church community.

Look Ahead to Next Meeting
1. Date ________________________________
2. Time ________________________________
3. Place ________________________________
4. Phone or e-mail host if you cannot attend.
5. Look ahead to the Observe section for the next meeting.
CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, lead me, guide me along the way as a parent. If you lead me, I cannot stray. Let me walk each day with you. Lead me when sin and others oppress me. I put all my trust in you. Lead me, O Lord.

—Jim McGinnis
A Call to Peace

SUGGESTIONS FOR FAMILY MEETINGS

Family meetings should be held once a week

- Decisions should be made by consensus. A topic can be tabled until the next meeting. (Some decisions are non-negotiable, but after a period of holding family meetings, most decisions can be reached by consensus.)
- Family meetings should include a review of the next week's activities.
- Family meetings should include planning a fun activity for the coming week.
- End the meeting by playing a game or serving dessert.
- Sitting at a cleared table is conducive to staying on task for a family meeting.

—Jane Nelson
Positive Discipline
THREE

A Match Made in Heaven

Gather

OPENING PRAYER

Dear Lord, you have created each of us as a unique being with special gifts, talents and personalities. You have made us an integral part of your family and placed us in a distinct time in history. You have called us to use all that we are to serve you. Please send your Spirit to help us to hear your call in the married or single life. Amen

Report on Actions

Scripture Reflection

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I
will make you fish for people." And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

—Mark 1:14-20


Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

—Acts 4:32-35

How were the early disciples of Jesus empowered to make such radical lifestyle changes?

—What does this Scripture passage say to us about how you are called to follow Christ?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

When presented with a choice that must be made, we need to look deeply into ourselves and seek to discover there what God is saying to us. Every major decision I ever had to make became a discovery that brought a sense of peace and joy because I was doing the right thing. That is a gift that God gives to all of us.

—Fr. Thomas Faucher, "Sorting through Life's Many Options"

As the recent results of the Year 2000 Census confirm, marriage as the basis of family life continues to decline in America. Since 1970 the rate of marriage has dropped by about one third, the out-of-wedlock birth ratio has climbed from 11% to 33% of all births, the divorce rate has doubled, and the number of people living together outside of marriage has grown by over 1000%. With the exception of nonmarital cohabitation, which increased dramatically, the marriage-decline trends decelerated a little in the 1990s. But they have continued in the same direction. As of now, there is no tangible evidence of a turnaround, although a more pro-marriage attitude does seem to be gaining ground in the media and the culture at large.

—David Popenoe


Percentage of people ages 25-44 living alone in 1970: 14.8
Percentage of people ages 25-44 living alone in 1997: 29.0

—U.S. Bureau of the Census

God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation and thus the capacity and responsibility of love and communion. Love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being.

—John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio, No. 11
Marriage is really a call from God, it is not caprice or passion, but a vocation and a call from God, just as there is a vocation to the priesthood. It is a divine vocation; it is holy and it makes holy, it is apostolic and missionary.

—Cardinal Joseph Cardijn, Spiritual Founder of CFM

Observe

1. Describe marriage as it is portrayed in today’s society. Describe the single life.
2. Ask your parents, grandparents, older friends and relatives what influenced their vocation choices? Did any make radical changes from what their families expected of them? What options did they have?
3. When you were growing up, what vocation expectations did society or your parents place on you, considering your gender, religion, social or economic status?

Judge

1. What is radical about Christian married life? Single life?
2. What can single people do to support those who have a vocation to marriage?
3. What can parents do to teach the value of married life? With what other forces are parents competing?
4. How can a good marriage improve the world?
5. How can supporting married life lead to more vocations to priesthood and religious life?

Act

1. Organize a ministry fair to showcase resources for happier marriages and families, including the Christian Family Movement.
2. Use your expertise to support married life in your community. For instance, become involved in your church’s marriage preparation program.
3. Attend a marriage enrichment program (i.e., Marriage Retreat, Covenant Weekend or Marriage Encounter), or organize one in your parish.

Look Ahead to Next Meeting

1. Date ____________________________
2. Time ____________________________
3. Place ____________________________
4. Phone or e-mail host if you cannot attend.
5. Look ahead to the Observe section for the next meeting.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, teach me to be generous, teach me to serve You as You deserve, to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labor and not seek reward, except that of knowing that I do Your will.

Amen.

—St. Ignatius Loyola
Welcome In!

Gather

OPENING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you welcomed and accepted all people, especially those in need and those left out of the mainstream of society. Teach us to see your face in the faces of all we meet. May we imitate you, our gracious Shepherd and Host, in hospitality and generosity.

Let us pray together the words of Psalm 23.

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name’s sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.
Amen.
Report on Actions

Scripture Reflection
A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

Now on that same day, two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?"

...Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is nearly over." So he went in to stay with them.


—What may have prevented the disciples from recognizing Jesus?

—What did they gain by welcoming Jesus into their company?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

If sometimes our poor people have had to die of starvation, it is not because God didn’t care for them, but because you and I didn’t give, were not instruments of love in the hands of God, to give them that bread, to give them that clothing; because we did not recognize him, when once more Christ came in distressing disguise—in the hungry man, the lonely man, in the homeless child, and seeking for shelter.

God has identified himself with the hungry, the sick, the naked, the homeless; hunger, not only for bread, but for love, for care, to be somebody to someone; nakedness, not of clothing only, but nakedness of that compassion that very few people give to the unknown; homelessness, not only just for shelter made of stone, but that homelessness that comes from having no one to call your own.

—Mother Teresa of Calcutta

A Gift for God

Distressed by the stark loneliness and alienation he noted among those confined to institutions, Jean Vanier in 1964 invited two individuals with intellectual disabilities to live with him in the first L'Arche community in Trosly-Breuil, France. Each L’Arche community is governed by a basic desire to create a home environment where faithful relationships are based on acceptance and forgiveness. As well, L’Arche residents and their assistants seek to reveal each person’s unique value and the gifts that each person can offer to others. Finally, L’Arche supporters seek to change society by choosing to live in a community setting as a sign that hope and love are not beyond reach.... Internationally, there are more
Hospitality is basic to the human heart. It creates a sense of belonging and we all want to feel as if we “belong.” This desire to belong is even more acute in people with disabilities. It is a struggle for them to find their rightful place in the community and the Kingdom of God. Many times, barriers of architecture and attitude make people with disabilities feel different and not welcomed. Reaching out to these individuals along with a conscious effort at hospitality helps us to accept these individuals as they are. It begins the process of healing and helping them to feel more “at home” in the community and God’s people. Hospitality means sharing the space of another and to share our lives and our space with people with disabilities by extending hospitality presents us with many challenges.

—Gregory Rosko

Family Perspectives Journal, Fall 2005

Observe
1. What attributes of other persons make you uncomfortable associating with them?
2. Tell of a time when you felt excluded.
3. What organizations and groups offer welcome in your community to those who are different or marginalized?
4. How accessible are your homes and church buildings? What different meanings can “accessible” have?

Judge
1. How can you create a community of welcome in your own home that says to others, “Stay with us”? 
2. What can you do about the causes of poverty and exclusion in your community? 
3. How can you balance concern for strangers with concerns for personal safety? 
4. What needs to change in you for you to be more welcoming to others you don’t know or who are different from you?

Act
1. Investigate community services to the homeless, recovering addicts, immigrants, and other marginalized groups. Participate in one of their projects.
2. As a family, participate in Special Olympics or another community event with special needs persons.
3. Join the greeter ministry in your church.
4. Organize a block party and invite all the neighbors to meet one another.
6. As a group or as a family, watch the film, Entertaining Angels, a biography of Dorothy Day.

Look Ahead to Next Meeting
1. Date __________________________
2. Time __________________________
3. Place __________________________
4. Phone or e-mail host if you cannot attend.
5. Look ahead to the Observe section for the next meeting.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred...let me sow love,
Where there is injury...pardon,
Where there is doubt...faith,
Where there is despair...hope,
Where there is darkness...light,
Where there is sadness...joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled...as to console,
To be understood...as to understand,
To be loved...as to love.
For it is in giving...that we receive,
It is in pardoning, that we are pardoned,
It is in dying...that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.

— St. Francis of Assisi
Gather

OPENING PRAYER

Dear God, tonight as we study technology and the impact it has on our lives we are grateful for the human ingenuity that has blessed our lives with so many modern conveniences. These inventions make it possible to spend less time doing mundane things and more time reaching out to experience your world in new ways. We are aware that new technologies change our world in ways that may not always be so welcome. Help us to understand the impact technology has on our lives for both good and ill. Give us the insight we need to be able to control new technologies and never lose sight of your purposes for our lives. Amen.

Report on Actions

Scripture Reflection

A reading from the book of Job.

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind: “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins like a man. I will question you, and you shall...
declare to me. Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy? Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb, when I made the clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling band, and prescribed bounds for it, and set bars and doors?"

—Job 38:1-10

A reading from the first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians.

When I came to you, brothers, proclaiming the mystery of God, I did not come with sublimity of words or of wisdom. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling, and my message and my proclamation were not with persuasive words or wisdom, but with a demonstration of spirit and power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom but on the power of God.

—1 Corinthians 2:1-5

How does life change when one is dependent on the power of God and not human wisdom?

What would have to change for you to say you are dependent on God alone?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

In the 1950s the biggest promise of consumer technology was convenience. Today’s prevailing advertising theme is the promise to simplify... Consumer technology forms the invisible foundation of our lives... Our lives are so steeped in technology that the acquisition of more comes naturally.

Today’s consumer technologies are far more powerful than (in the 60s and 70s)... We must become reflective consumers and begin to consider the consequences of introducing new technologies in our lives, begin examining the effect that technology has on time and the value it adds to human experience.

—John Naisbitt
High Tech, High Touch

The cell phone is a nice symbol for what I’m trying to talk about. It’s an immensely convenient piece of equipment, but we haven’t yet evolved a working etiquette for its use. We haven’t dared to tame it, to force it to abide by the rules of civilized behavior. This tool, this mere servant, rudely interrupts our meetings, movies, conversations, and dinners, even our most somber religious services, yet for some reason we accept that intrusion as if we dare not confront this powerful barbarian in our midst.

A crying human toddler in a quiet restaurant wouldn’t get that kind of tolerance. It would be disciplined and made to understand that such things aren’t done. But we forgive the cell phone for such intrusions because it plugs us into the body electric, makes us as one with the cast of
millions also carrying cell phones everywhere they go, never out of touch, never unavailable.

—Jay Bookman
Caught in the Current

I almost ran over a student the other day. He was walking casually down the middle of a leafy suburban street in Cambridge. As I approached I assumed he would hear me and move onto the pavement. It would have been rude to have tooted the horn, so I didn’t. But he didn’t move, and only became aware of me as I braked to a halt right behind him.

Was the lad deaf? Not at all. But inserted firmly in both his ears were the distinctive white buds of iPod headphones. He had been walking peacefully, wrapped in a portable, personal bubble of sound. Physically, he was out in the open air. Birds were singing. The sun shone and the wind sighed in the trees. But he might as well have been in a soundproofed basement. He was the living, breathing embodiment of the philosopher Martin Heidegger’s observation that technology is the art of arranging the world so that we don’t have to experience it.

—John Naughton
The Observer, Jan 23, 2005

Observe

1. List the tools that you use to simplify or enhance your daily life.

2. For each tool that you mentioned in Observe 1, list a benefit and a limitation or drawback involved in its use.

3. How do the tools you mentioned above affect your interactions with other people or intrude upon your life? How do you deal with this?

4. Ask two middle or high school students to describe their use of technology and its impact on their lives.

Judge

1. Do any of the tools you use to improve your life, complicate it instead? Or have they been beneficial to your family?

2. How does technology strengthen or weaken communal experiences (family, church, civic, and neighborhood life)?

3. What principles govern your use of technology? For example, do you control your cell phone or does your cell phone control you? How do you balance energy conservation and economic necessity?

4. Do you trust in the tools of humankind or do you trust in God? Think about ways you seek to control your environment through technological advances. What negative impact can this have on your life?

Act

1. Create technology free zones in your life—for example, in the car, in the bedroom, during dinner, Sunday morning—to create room for human interaction.

2. Go on a nature hike or camping trip and leave the electronics at home.

3. Investigate and become informed about chat rooms, identity theft, unethical or immoral material on the Internet, advertising and merchandizing directed toward children, etc.

4. Develop rules for the use of technology in your family. Install updated filters on your computers.
Look Ahead to Next Meeting

1. Date __________________________
2. Time __________________________
3. Place __________________________
4. Phone or e-mail host if you cannot attend.
5. Look ahead to the Observe section for the next meeting.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God, thank you for the time we have spent together examining the way human inventions have impacted our lives. We are aware that these technologies sometimes have made it harder for us to connect with each other and with you. Make us aware of your power in our lives. Save us from the destructive aspects of technology and teach us how to use new discoveries in a way that gives you glory. Help us to know always that you alone are God and to keep space in our lives to experience your awesome presence in creation. Amen.
Gather

OPENING PRAYER

O God of all, we thank you for your love for humankind. Help us to see the ways you are acting through the faith traditions of others. We see your love especially in our own families, whose members are often from different churches and faith expressions. May we be good ambassadors of your love to all. Amen.

Report on Actions

Scripture Reflection

A reading from the first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians.

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not
have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all. Love never ends.

I Cor. 3:1-7

—What does love have to do with practicing one’s religion?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

I am in every religion as a thread through a string of pearls.

—A Hindu prayer

Likewise, other religions found everywhere try to counter the restlessness of the human heart, each in its own manner, by proposing “ways,” comprising teachings, rules of life, and sacred rites. The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. Indeed, she proclaims, and ever must proclaim Christ “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6), in whom men may find the fullness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself.

“Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions”

Nostra Aetate, Vatican II, 1965, No. 2

Difference of confession between the spouses does not constitute an insurmountable obstacle for marriage, when they succeed in placing in common what they have received from their respective communities, and learn from each other the way in which each lives in fidelity to Christ. But the difficulties of mixed marriages must not be underestimated. They arise from the fact that the separation of Christians has not yet been overcome. The spouses risk experiencing the tragedy of Christian disunity even in the heart of their own home.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Nos. 1634 and 1636

Until recent times (1983), Roman Catholics who married someone of another church or religion were required to promise to baptize and raise their children as Catholics. This requirement is changed to respect the religious freedom of the spouses. Now, the Catholic partner is asked to attest that he intends to continue practicing the faith himself and to do “all in his power” to raise his children as Catholics. If the spouse cannot in conscience agree, the family may chose to raise the children in the other’s religion.

CCC, Nos. 1633-1637

It also seems to me that we need to appreciate the good that can come from interfaith marriages. In a strange sort of way these marriages do remind us that God’s call for the human family transcends all religious boundaries. There is no religion that has the only path to God. While we find great benefit in our own faith traditions and want to see them passed onto future generations, no one tradition has an exclusive hold on God’s attention. When people of radically different yet
connected traditions marry, perhaps they are imaging a new way of viewing life. It may seem disconcerting, but could it not also be a call to greater religious harmony?

—"A Catholic Priest’s Perspective on Interfaith Marriage,"
Rev. Walter H. Cuenin
Interfaithfamily.com on-line magazine, Issue #89

Neither partner can surrender his or her identity without impoverishing both. The deepest thrill of marriage is to experience intimacy with one who has a distinct existence. This person, who has unique talents, who can carry on different and separate relationships with other people, nevertheless shares a deep, special union with you and you with him or her. Marriage calls for many adjustments in each partner’s habits, yet it should never attempt to violate either partner’s core identity.

—John L. Thomas, S.J.
Beginning Your Marriage, Interfaith Edition

Do not marry unbelieving women until they believe; a slave woman who believes is better than a free woman who does not believe, even though the latter may appear very attractive to you.

—Al-Qur’an: Al-Baqarah (2:221)

There are many Muslim girls of a marriageable age who are living in non-Islamic countries, and it is the duty of the Muslim men to protect these girls from marrying non-Muslim men, which is absolutely prohibited in Islam. If Muslim men loosely practice their right to marry Christian or Jewish women, the Muslim girls in non-Islamic societies will be forced into unwanted circumstances and Muslim men will be at least partially responsible and will get their share of the punishment from Allah.

—www.islamfortoday.com/interfaithmarriage.htm

In-married Jews maintain more Jewish connections and greater engagement with Jewish life than intermarried Jews. The most significant differences between in-married and intermarried Jews are associated with synagogue membership and attendance, memberships in [Jewish Community Centers] and other Jewish organizations, donations to federation campaigns, volunteerism under Jewish auspices, adult Jewish education, lighting Shabbat candles and keeping kosher. Less dramatic but still substantial differences between the in-married and intermarried are associated with having close friends who are Jewish, giving to Jewish causes other than the federation system, holding or attending a Passover seder, lighting Chanukah candles, fasting on Yom Kippur, and connections to Israel.

—National Jewish Population Survey

Observe
1. Make a list of the different religions in your community. Has there been an increase in the number and diversity of these groups? What impact has this had on your community?

2. What common concerns do the various religions (above) have about inter-religious marriage?

3. Research other religious traditions and events. Attend if permitted. Examples are Seder meals at a local synagogue, Greek Orthodox festivals, and musical concerts from other denominations.
4. Invite a couple from an interfaith (one baptized, one not baptized) or interchurch (both baptized) marriage to speak with your group about faith, family, and marriage.

5. Discuss with your spouse different religious traditions that you brought from your pre-marriage family. What have you taken from these traditions and now continue with your family? In other words, how have you and your spouse blended?

**Judge**

1. Revised regulations respecting the religious beliefs of those marrying Roman Catholics (above) leave the couple to decide in which church to raise their children. In your opinion, in what religion should children of mixed faith marriages be raised? What challenges do you see?

2. Whether you are from different or the same religious background, what have you and your spouse had to "bear" in love? Were there any issues that were not discussed before you married?

3. What challenges do a couple from different churches face in marrying and having children? What extra challenges do interfaith families face?

4. What are the challenges of marrying someone who is not religious and/or does not believe in God?

**Act**

1. Attend a religious event of another religion and/or culture.

2. Explore the documents and websites quoted in this chapter.


4. With your children talk about which extended family traditions are held most dear. Decide which traditions from both sides of the family could become your family traditions.

**Look Ahead to Next Meeting**

1. Date __________________________

2. Time __________________________

3. Place __________________________

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5. Look ahead to the Observe section for the next meeting.

**CLOSING PRAYER**

*Almighty God, our heavenly Father,*  
*Who gave marriage to be a source of blessing to mankind,*  
*We thank you for the joys of family life.*  
*May we know your presence and peace in our homes;*  
*Fill them with your love,*  
*And use them for your glory;*  
*Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*  
—The Alternative Service Book 1980
Gather

OPENING PRAYER

Eternal God of Love,
in you we live and move and have our being.
Breathe through us again this day;
give us the courage to be open
and welcoming to your Spirit
that we may be led to do your will
and follow in your ways,
today and tomorrow. Amen

—Donal Harrington & Julie Kavanagh
Prayer for Parish Groups

Report on Actions

Scripture Reflection

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful
and prudent manager whom his master will put
in charge of his slaves, to give them their
allowance of food at the proper time? Blessed is
that slave whom his master will find at work
when he arrives. Truly I tell you, he will put that
one in charge of all his possessions. But if that slave says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and if he begins to beat the other slaves, men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour that he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and put him with the unfaithful. That slave who knew what his master wanted, but did not prepare himself or do what was wanted, will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know and did what deserved a beating will receive a light beating. From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded.”


—What does this scripture reading tell us about how we are called to use the abundance in our lives?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

Abundance is the opposite side of the materialism coin. Materialism might say, “I want that,” but abundance says “I have that!”... Materialism, oddly enough, is based on a feeling of lack....the good news is that a feeling of lack can be soothed by spending time with people you care about, by walking your dog, by baking bread, or by doing something nice for someone else. That emptiness of soul is filled simply, but not easily, because it takes effort and energy to make life meaningful. It’s worth it though for as you fulfill your essential self, your energy skyrockets.

People who feel they have abundance tend not to acquire much more stuff because they already have what matters. And what matters is the feeling of abundance! This feeling is the ultimate richness, and it isn’t based on stuff.

...Abundance is about opening your eyes to and actively appreciating what you already have.

—Chris Alexander, Creating Extraordinary Joy

You are possessed by the things you possess. They claim your time and effort in paying for them; they sap your emotional and physical energy in worrying about them, protecting them, caring for them; they fill your imagination with dreams of how to get more of them.

—Mary E. Buckley & Gregory Augustine Pierce Perspectives on Marriage, 1998

Some people point to credit cards as the principle villain behind financial crises....the use of credit is an important issue, but... the real danger has more to do with old-fashioned greed than it does with credit....Greed is really an attitude....At its root is a lack of contentment with the provisions of God.

—Bruce Howard, “Say Goodbye to Greed,” Catholic Digest, February 2005

The best thing you can do, and teach your kids, is to give. I’ve met thousands of millionaires, and what the healthy ones have in common is a love of giving. Building wealth enables you to give more financially. A lot of times you won’t be able to help someone if you don’t have enough money. Scripture says that we are expected to tithe and help the poor. Take the Good Samaritan. He reached into his own pocket to pay an innkeeper to take care of an injured
stranger. Would we ever have heard of the Good Samaritan if he hadn't had those "extra" shekels clinking around in his cloak? Money gives power to good intentions.

—Dave Ramsey
"Your Road to Financial Wellness"
Guideposts, January 2005

It is no easy task to walk this earth and find peace. Inside of us, it would seem, something is at odds with the very rhythm of things and we are forever restless, dissatisfied, frustrated, and aching. We are so overcharged with desire that it is hard to come to simple rest. Desire is always stronger than satisfaction.

—Ronald Rolheiser, OMI
The Holy Longing

Observe
1. Give an example of abundance in your life.
2. Do you have too much stuff, too little or just enough? Give examples.
3. What things do you love and could not live without? If you had to evacuate in 5 minutes, what would you take?
4. Where have you personally experienced greed? Where have you witnessed generosity?
5. In what ways do the marketing of products and services influence you?

Judge
1. Why is it so hard to recognize, accept, and appreciate the abundance in our lives?
2. What choices do you need to make to give yourself peace?

Act
1. Delay a purchase for a month and see if you still need it.
2. Review your Family Financial Plan for spending and charitable giving. Tithe ten percent of your income to your church and other charities.
3. Clean out the stuff and clutter in your home. Have a CFM yard/garage sale and give the earnings to a favorite charity.
4. Find a way to teach your kids to give. Discuss with your family during dinner: What abundances do we enjoy? Formulate a plan for sharing these abundances with others. Example: Someone in your family plays the piano. Share the gift of music at a local retirement home.

Look Ahead to Next Meeting
1. Date ______________________________
2. Time ______________________________
3. Place ______________________________
4. Phone or e-mail host if you cannot attend.
5. Look ahead to the Observe section for the next meeting.
CLOSING PRAYER

Oh God, when I have food, help me to remember the hungry;
When I have work, help me to remember the jobless;
When I have a warm home, help me to remember the homeless;
When I am without pain, help me to remember those who suffer;
And remembering, help me to destroy my complacency and bestir my compassion.
Make me concerned enough to help, by word and deed, those who cry out for what we take for granted.
Amen.

—Salesian Missions
Prayers
Gather

Let's try something different!
Instead of finding our topic in the book, at this meeting we will spend about ten minutes coming up with our own, based on our recent experiences. Apply the CFM Social Inquiry method—Observe-Judge-Act—to a recent experience or current event. CFM teaches us to see God's activity and purpose in our everyday lives.

Setting: For this meeting, you will need some slips of paper, pens, and a small container.

OPENING PRAYER

O God, we look to you for all good things. Open our eyes to see your hand in all the events of our life and to recognize your grace in unexpected places. When events challenge or puzzle us, strengthen our faith in your wisdom and love.

We thank you, Lord, for your help in our recent CFM actions. (Here, mention your family's and your group's recent Actions. This takes the place of reporting on Actions.)
For whom and for what else should we pray? (Offer spontaneous prayer intentions. These will be relevant as the meeting progresses.)

We ask all these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Scripture Reflection
A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen....”


—What did the women expect to find when they set out that day?

—How did they react to the unexpected?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

It happens every day. You’re brushing your teeth in the morning and all of a sudden you get some insight into a problem you’ve been struggling with for days. Or you’re reading a familiar passage of scripture and, without warning a word or phrase jumps out at you as it never has before. Or you’re standing in the checkout line in the grocery store when, for no apparent reason, you suddenly feel very close to God. Or you’re sipping a cup of coffee with a friend, and she makes a remark that gives you a brand new way of looking at something.

Call these experiences what you will: moments of insight, inspiration, or grace. I like to call them mini-epiphanies. Strictly speaking, the word epiphany means an appearance or manifestation of God....

We experience these so called everyday epiphanies every time we gain a new insight into some aspect of our faith, feel good about a choice we’ve made, learn a worthwhile lesson from a bad mistake, delight in some simple pleasure, discover some good in an apparently bad situation, find ourselves thanking God for our blessings, or stand in wonder and awe before the unfathomable mystery of existence.

—Melanie Svoboda, SND

Everyday Epiphanies: Seeing the Sacred in Every Thing

Create an Instant Meeting

Preparation steps:
Give everyone a slip of paper. In one sentence, each person writes a single event or experience that has been very significant in his or her life since the group was last together.

Keep in mind the intentions for which you prayed at the Opening Prayer. These may remind you of an experience to share.

Mix the slips of paper in a container.

Next, the group chooses one of these events or experiences to be the subject of inquiry in this meeting. (This should be done quickly.)
Sample subjects:
- The crime rate is increasing in our community.
- Our adult son just moved back home.
- Our family is experiencing an illness or loss.
- Our local school proposes a new curriculum.
- A new baby is due soon.
- The election is coming up — or has recently occurred.

Meeting Steps*

Invite the person whose experience is selected to explain it in more depth.

The group then can share their own experience of similar situations or events.

Observe

1. What was the cause of this fact or event? Persons involved, relationships, behavior, reactions?
2. Is there a historical reason or a larger situation leading to the event? Did attitudes or values lead to it?
3. What is the impact or the consequences of the event? Who will be most directly affected?
4. How will the event affect the policies of the structures or institutions involved? How will it affect the broader society?

Judge

1. What connections do you notice between the event and the Scripture reading for this evening?
2. Does another story from Scripture come to mind? What connections do you see?
3. What was unexpected or surprising about the experience or your reactions to it?

4. What is positive in what you have observed? What is negative? Why?
5. What is a Christian judgment of this fact or event?

*If you have more time, select another experience and repeat Observe and Judge.

Act

1. Based on what you have observed and decided, take one positive action to make a difference in your family life or in your local community.
2. Write about your group’s experience with the “Instant Meeting” and share it in ACT. Send stories to www.act-editor@cfm.org.
3. Practice this Observe-Judge-Act process again this week with a new event on your own or with your family.

Look Ahead to Next Meeting

1. Date __________________
2. Time __________________
3. Place __________________
4. Phone or e-mail host if you cannot attend.
5. Look ahead to the Observe section for the next meeting.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, through your redemptive power and through the guidance of the Church, help us aid individuals, couples and families to fulfill God’s mysterious design. Let us do God’s will with the spirit of love and humility, so that we may receive the Kingdom of God in our lives.
OPENING PRAYER

Dear God, tonight we study the messages that come to us through the modern media. You have blessed us with a myriad of sources for information about this world and we are grateful. Sometimes the sheer volume of information can be troublesome, however. Sometimes the messages are so loud and insistent that we cannot hear your voice. Guide our discussion tonight. Help us to understand the impact the media has on our lives. Lead us into taking action to make a difference. Amen.

REPORT ON ACTIONS

Scripture Reflection

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." The Samaritan woman said to him, "How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks the water will be thirsty again; but who-
ever drinks the water I shall give will become in
him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”
The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water,
so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming
to draw water.”
—John 4:7, 9, 13-15

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of
Isaiah that says: “You will indeed listen, but
never understand, and you will indeed look, but
never perceive. For this people’s heart has grown
dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they
have shut their eyes; so that they might not look
with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and
understand with their heart and turn— and I
would heal them.” But blessed are your eyes, for
they see, and your ears, for they hear.
—Matthew 13:14-16

—What is the water that Jesus speaks of in this Scripture
passage? Why is it so satisfying?
—What prevents people from hearing and understanding
the Good News?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

Trust is built by having shared experiences
with other people. Children learn how to get
along with others by doing it in real life. It’s
ironic that the very technology that is supposed
to bring us together actually causes us to spend
more time alone than ever before. Our alone time
isn’t the only problem. Our window on the world
is no longer the picture window in front of our
homes—it’s the TV, computer, or video game
screen. When we look through it we don’t see our
friends and neighbors going about their lives. We
see...[the] crime, violence, and meanness so
prevalent on TV and in video games. The world
is a pretty scary place when viewed through our
screens.
—David Walsh
“Wired but Disconnected”
National Institute on Media and the Family

Patterns set in the early pre-school years with
regard to television viewing can snowball as the
child gets older and school work becomes harder.
Children who watched informative, educational
television as preschoolers watch more informa-
tive television as they get older and use television
as a complement to school. Children who
watched more entertainment television, watched
fewer informative programs as they got older
and used television more to entertain and as a
leisure pastime
—Tannis MacBeth
Tuning In To Young Viewers

Parents as the primary and most important
educators of their children are also the first to
Teach them about the media. They are called to
train their offspring in the “moderate, critical,
watchful and prudent use of media in the home.”
(Familiaris Consortio, #76) Parents also need to
regulate the use of media in the home. This
would include planning and scheduling media
use, strictly limiting the time children devote to
media, making entertainment a family experi-
ence, putting some media entirely off limits and
periodically excluding all of them for the sake of
other family activities. Above all parents should
give good example to children by their own
thoughtful and selective use of media.
—Pope John Paul II,
Message for 2004 World Communications Day, #5

Observe
1. Do you have rules about when TV can be watched in your home?
2. Do you discuss TV programs with your child or spouse?
3. Do you check movie ratings before attending a movie? What sources of movie evaluation do you consult?
4. Are you aware of the listening habits of all the members of your family?
5. Ask a teenager for his or her input on the above Observes.

Select a day and have each member of the family complete the chart below based on their media usage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movies</th>
<th>TV</th>
<th>Internet</th>
<th>Video Games</th>
<th>Music</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Time spent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Production (1-10)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Moral Values (1-10)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many people with you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why did you choose the activity?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Judge
1. What did you learn from answering the Observe questions? What concerns do your answers raise about the use of media in your family's life?
2. How do modern "prophets" speak to us through the media?
3. How is the Internet like a village? What are some of the positive results of Internet usage?
4. How can media interfere with forming bonds between members of the family?
5. How can families counteract negative effects of media exposure?

Act
1. Have a family meeting to develop rules for media usage.
2. Create a suggestion box of media-free family activities. Take turns choosing an activity once a week.
3. If you are unhappy with programming choices you are receiving or conversely supportive of them, let your views be known by the media outlets responsible and/or public officials.
Look Ahead to Next Meeting

1. Date ____________________
2. Time ____________________
3. Place ____________________
4. Phone or e-mail host if you cannot attend.
5. Look ahead to the Observe section for the next meeting.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God, Our ears are full of the messages that come to us from many sources. Some are loud and obnoxious, full of fear and anxiety. Others are joyful and spirit filled, full of grace and truth. It can be difficult to hear your voice in the midst of so much chaos. Help us to listen through the cacophony to the clear voice of your Truth so that we can follow you more closely day by day. Amen.
TEN

Live Without Fear

Gather

OPENING PRAYER

Play a recording of “Be Not Afraid” by Bob Dufford, or “On Eagle’s Wings” by Michael Joncas, or another song related to the topic.

O God, Father, everyday we hear about so many traumatic events: natural disasters, storms, disease, war, terrorism, crime. Life seems to be full of uncertainty and danger, and we have all been affected in some way. We worry about our families. How will we keep them safe; how will we prevent them from giving in to fear? Yet we know you are calling us to bring a message of love to our world. Help us to face our insecurities with hope in your providence. We ask this in the name of Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Report on Actions

Scripture Reflection

A reading from the Book of Psalms.

You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress; my
God, in whom I trust."
For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence; he will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
You will not fear the terror of the night, or the arrow that flies by day, or the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or the destruction that wastes at noonday.

—Psalm 91:1-6

A Reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
"Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

—Matthew 5:3-12

Social Inquiry

Fears may develop rapidly after a traumatic event. After the initial feelings of shock and numbness wear off, some people find that they are still having trouble resuming daily life because of lingering fear.

Fears may revolve around activities directly related to the traumatic event, or they could be about something you have read, heard, or even imagined about the event. Fears can also be related to a resurgence of painful feelings from a past trauma or loss that is triggered by the current situation. As a result of the September 11 attacks, some people may have difficulty:

• Allowing a family member or loved one to fly
• Saying goodbye when a loved one leaves for work
• Traveling in an elevator
• Spending time in tall buildings
• Visiting tourist sites
• Returning to work
• Being in large groups of people
• Leaving home

It’s normal to experience these fears and other responses to traumatic stress like:

• Anxiety or nervousness
• Irritability
• Depression
• Anger
• Mood swings
• Physical symptoms such as chronic aches and pains or difficulty sleeping
• Nightmares

—What is the image of God revealed by these readings?
—What is needed for one to be at peace and have no fear?
The amount of time that people will experience these emotions and fears will vary. It may depend on the nature of your involvement with the traumatic event or whether you’ve experienced other kinds of trauma or loss in your life....

“Coping With Fears Following a Traumatic Event”
U.S. Coastguard/Homeland Security

After September 11, we are a wounded people. We share loss and pain, anger and fear, shock and determination in the face of these attacks on our nation and all humanity....

The war-like acts of September 11 were appalling attacks on our nation, our citizens and citizens of many other countries. The Holy Father rightly called these acts crimes against humanity. Terrorism is not a new problem, but this terrorist threat is unique because of its global dimensions and the sheer magnitude of the terror its authors are willing and able to unleash. It is also new for us because we have not experienced war-like acts of violence on our own soil for many decades....

We need to turn to God and to one another in hope. Hope assures us that, with God’s grace, we will see our way through what now seems such a daunting challenge. For believers, hope is not a matter of optimism, but a source for strength and action in demanding times. For peacemakers, hope is the indispensable virtue. This hope, together with our response to call of conversion, must be rooted in God’s promise and nourished by prayer, penance, and acts of charity and solidarity.

Our nation and the Church are being tested in fundamental ways. Our nation has a right and a duty to respond and must do so in right ways, seeking to defend the common good and build a more just and peaceful world. Our community of faith has the responsibility to live out in our time the challenges of Jesus in the Beatitudes—to comfort those who mourn, to seek justice, to become peacemakers. We face these tasks with faith and hope, asking God to protect and guide us as we seek to live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ in these days of trial.

—U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
“A Pastoral Message: Living With Faith and Hope After September 11”
November 14, 2001

Fear is something that comes upon us the moment we don’t believe that God is able to keep us, or all we care about, safe. FEAR—or False Evidence Appearing Real—easily strikes children because they can’t always discern what’s real and what isn’t. Our comfort, reassurance, and love can help them; but praying, speaking the Word of God in faith, and praising God for His love and power, can free them.

When Jesus was at sea with His disciples and a storm came up, He responded by saying, “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith” (Matthew 8:26). He wants us, like them, to believe that our boat won’t sink if He’s in it with us.

There are times, however, when fear is more than a passing emotion. It can grip a child’s heart so strongly that no actions or words can take it away. When that happens, the child is being harassed by a spirit of fear. And the Bible clearly tells us a spirit of fear does not come from God. It comes from the enemy of our soul.

Parents have the authority and power through Jesus Christ to resist the spirit of fear on their child’s behalf. Fear doesn’t have power over them. We have the power over it. Jesus gave us...
the authority over all the power of the enemy (Luke 10:19). Don’t be deceived into thinking otherwise. If fear persists after you have prayed, ask two or more strong believers to pray with you. Where two or three are gathered together in the name of the Lord, He is there in the midst of them (Matthew 18:20). Fear and the presence of the Lord cannot occupy the same space.

Because we have Jesus, we and our children never have to live with or accept a spirit of fear as a way of life.

—Stormie Omartian, *The Power of a Praying Parent*

**Observe**

1. Interview a family member or friend who has lived through a natural disaster or another very traumatic experience (i.e. hurricane, tornado, auto accident, fire, etc.). What crosses does he or she still bear in the aftermath of that experience?

2. What was your initial reaction to a recent disaster or traumatic event? What fears or anxieties do you or family members still experience as a result of this?

3. What anxieties have developed in your children as a result of a traumatic event?

4. List what aids or techniques you or your family members have used to cope or help your children cope with the fears that you experience as a result of the uncertainties in your world.

**Judge**

1. How does your faith play a part in how you deal with the uncertainties of this world?

2. Which of the things listed in Observe 4 have been the most successful for you?

3. In light of the Bishops’ Pastoral Message, what are you as a Christian called to do when traumatic events occur in our world?

4. How can you promote peace and a freedom from fear in your home?

**Act**

1. Have a family meeting and discuss with your family what they would do in the event of a fire or accident if one of the parents were unable to be there.

2. Join or initiate a neighborhood watch program that combats crime.

3. Volunteer for a local relief agency, such as the Red Cross, or a public health service in your community.

4. Adopt the custom of blessing your family members when they leave home for work, school, or travel.

5. As a family, send encouragement or other support to men and women in the armed services.

6. Identify counseling resources in your community that can help you deal with a traumatic experience. Share your findings with your group.

**RESOURCES**


Look Ahead to Next Meeting

1. Make arrangements to keep in touch with each other if you are taking a break for the summer months.

2. Set a date and location for your Fall Kickoff.
   - Date ____________________________
   - Location _________________________
   - Phone and email of host ___________

3. Consider hosting a summer gathering or picnic for families in your group.

4. Invite new families to join CFM. Expand your group or start a new one. Help CFM train local leaders and produce excellent program materials by sending an extra monetary donation to CFM, P.O. Box 962, Evansville, IN 47706.

5. Send news of your group’s actions to CFM-USA by contacting the National Office, office@cfm.org or act-editor@cfm.org, or call 515-962-5507.

CLOSING PRAYER

A Rainbow Prayer—A Blessing Prayer after a Storm or a Time of Danger

Lord and Divine Protector,
when your trustful servant Noah came forth from the ark,
after a long and difficult storm,
he built an altar where he and his family gave praise to You, their God, for saving them.
Your holy rainbow was both a sign and a shrine for that prayer of gratitude.
We, like Noah and his family,
come now to thank You for protecting us in a time of danger.
That danger has now passed, and we prayerfully give thanks that You, our Lord, have heard our prayers and have kept us safe within Your holy hands.
Our sacrifice will be this lifting up of our hearts in gratitude and in praise of You.
We thank You not only for safety from harm but for this opportunity to place all our trust in You, our Lord and Savior.
This peril, even with its dark danger, has been for us a source of renewed devotion and of dedication to each other and to You.

Lord,
You are a God who brings forth good things from the dark times of life.
From that which is bad and ugly, You create a rainbow of the good and the beautiful.
We pause, and, in silence, thank You for Your protection and blessings in this danger that has passed.

Pause for silent prayer

Blessed are You, Lord our God, who saves those who trust in You.
Amen.

—Edward Hays, Prayers for the Domestic Church: