

My Time, My Treasure: *Where have all the hours gone...*

Hosts for the meeting should have paper and crayons ready. They invite the participants to introduce each other in this manner:

Make a name tag for yourself. Choose a color that represents you. Tear or cut it into a shape that represents you. On it show three things that you really like to do and three things you do not like to do but have to do. Explain your name tag to someone in the group you do not know. Introduce one another to the others in the group.

GATHER AND PRAY

*Blessed are You Lord Our God, Who Daily Gifts us With Time
You who are Lord and Creator
of space and time
yet who lives beyond them,
we praise You and honor You
for the gift of minutes, hours, days
and years.*

*Each second of life that You give
is precious and profound.*

*We pause now, so that we not take these gifts for granted,
so that we may remember in a holy way
that all time is holy,
a gift which calls forth
songs of gratitude from our hearts.*

Blessed are You, Lord our God,
who daily gifts us with time. Amen.

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Prayers for the Domestic Church:

A Handbook for Worship in the Home by Edward Hays
Easton, Kansas 60020: Forest of Peace Books, Inc., 1979, 1989

Scripture reflection (15-20 minute discussion)

There is an appointed time for everything
and a time for every affair under the heavens.
A time to be born, and a time to die;
A time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant.
A time to kill, and a time to heal;
and a time to tear down, and a time to build.
A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn and a time to dance.
A time to scatter stones, and a time to gather them;
a time to embrace, and a time to be far from
embraces.
A time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away.
A time to rend, and a time to sew;
a time to be silent, and a time to speak.
A time to love, and a time to hate;
a time of war, and a time of peace.

Ecclesiastes 3: 18

Or take the lilies: they do not spin, they do not weave;
but I tell you, Solomon in all his splendor was not arrayed
like any one of them. If God clothes in such splendor the
grass of the field, which grows today and is thrown on the
fire tomorrow, how much more will he provide for you!

Luke 12:27-28

- What do the two scripture readings tell us about the use of time?
- What do they say about setting up priorities about time?

The basic elements of CFM are OBSERVE, JUDGE, and ACT. The members of the group OBSERVE some aspect of the life around them, JUDGE what they see in the light of Christ's teachings and Christian principles, and agree to ACT as they think necessary. A more detailed explanation of the OBSERVE, JUDGE, and ACT is in "An Outline of a CFM Meeting" found on p. 50.

SOCIAL INQUIRY (60-90 minute discussion)

American family life has experienced a tremendous revolution in the past three decades. Family members have been increasingly drawn out of the home. This movement away from home and hearth has decreased the amount of time available for family time. Many families have been fragmented as individual members have become immersed in work, activities, volunteerism and leisure pursuits.

The result of more opportunities for involvement is that less time is spent together as a family. Ordinary day-to-day activities, which once were shared by family members, have been eliminated or replaced by individual pursuits. Many families find it nearly impossible to gather together even once a day for the evening meal.

The family that puts a high priority on family life takes the time for one another. They may have to juggle schedules and limit their involvement, but they do not let work or activities routinely infringe on family or couple time. Because they spend time together, they develop a strong sense of family, find time to solve their problems, teach their children relational skills, and give emotional support.

From your own personal experience, OBSERVE:

OBSERVES are facts. Often the "facts" are the opinions of others. But the opinions of the group about the facts and the discussion of the facts should be voiced only during the JUDGE section of the meeting.

1. Take 5-10 minutes to complete and reflect on the time chart (see page 11) for yourself. Remember that the chart only requires rough estimates.

2. On what do you spend most time? Least?
3. How much time is spent with your partner and your family?
4. What brings your family together?
5. If you had a free afternoon, how would you MOST LIKE to spend it?

In light of Christ's teachings, JUDGE:

In the JUDGE part of the meeting the group decides by discussion whether the situation observed is in line with what Christ would want. The group should be discussing only the facts observed. Otherwise, the discussion will not be on a practical level.

1. What does the way I use my time indicate about my priorities and values?
2. What would I like to change about my use of time? Why?
3. How do we benefit when we take time to share our experiences with each other?
4. What would Jesus say about the way we use our time?

In light of what has been discussed, ACT:

Remember, the suggested actions are just that, suggestions. Do not feel you must do all those mentioned in the book. It is best if the action comes from the ideas of the members as a result of the discussion, but it is important to do some action.

Choose one or more actions:

1. Plan a special family time together.
2. Make a date with your partner or with one of your children.
3. Eliminate something from your calendar.

My Time Chart

ESTIMATE the Number of Hours Spent during a Typical:

	Work day	Weekend day
Sleeping	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Eating/meals	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Working on the job	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
House work/upkeep/repair	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Commuting/"Chauffeuring"	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Partner time	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Family time (recreation)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Parenting/children's activities	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Praying and worship	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Watching TV/videos	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Hobbies/leisure/fitness	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Using computer (for recreation)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Using computer (at home for job)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Other	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

4. Find the time to do something that you want to do.
5. Before you go to bed each day for one full week, analyze how you have used your time for that day. Use the chart provided on the next page. Plan a family meeting to discuss your findings.
6. Develop your own action. Be specific.

Action to be carried out and reported on at next meeting:

Connect:

Share phone numbers (see page 52 of this book).

My Time Chart

Number of Hours Spent:	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
Sleeping							
Eating/meals							
Working on the job							
House work (cleaning/upkeep/repair)							
Commuting/"Chauffeuering"							
Meetings (not related to work)							
Partner time							
Family time (recreation)							
Parenting/children's activities							
Praying and worship							
Hobbies/leisure/fitness							
With friends							
Watching TV/videos							
Using computer (for recreation)							
Using computer (at home for job)							
Other							

Preparation for meeting 2:

1. Date _____

Time _____

Place _____

Everyone should take a turn hosting a meeting and leading a meeting. A light dessert with coffee/tea is customary.

2. Turn to meeting 2.

Read the Observes to prepare for the next meeting.

CLOSING PRAYER

THE TIME OF OUR LIVES

*For everything there is a season,
and a time for everything under heaven.
Lord, let us make time for you:
a time for a new year and a time for spring,
a time for Lent and a time for Easter,
a time for summer and a time for school to start,
a time for Thanksgiving and a time for snow.
O Lord, let us take time to celebrate You in these
times of our lives together.*

*Dolores Curran, Family Prayer,
St. Anthony Press, 1983*

Taking the Time to Build Family Memories

GATHER AND PRAY

Lord, You are always with us. You come constantly into our lives. Each day we receive from You the capacity to love one another. Everything is your GIFT, a message of your LOVE. In all our joys, in the light of sun, in a child's smile, a mother's kindness, a father's strength, it is always You who comes to meet us. Make us grateful, Lord, so that each of us, our families and our communities, may join hands and energies to build relationships that help us hear the words of Jesus and do the will of the Father. Amen.

*Family Spirituality:
The Sacred of the Ordinary,
National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers*

Reconnect (5-10 minutes)

An important part of the GATHER and PRAY portion of the meeting is reconnecting with one another. Take a minute or two for each to tell the others what has been going on in their life since the group last met. But, be careful not to let reconnecting distract you from the SOCIAL INQUIRY.

Report on Actions from the last meeting (5-10 minutes)

Report on how well you did with your action as decided at the previous meeting. What did you learn from the action? How did it benefit your family?

Scripture reflection

When the hour came, he took his place at table with the apostles. . . . Then he took a cup, gave thanks and said, "Take this and share it among yourselves" . . . Then, he took the bread, said the blessing, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body which will be given for you; do this in memory of me."

Luke 22:14, 17, 19

- What value did Jesus place on ritual?
- What would the disciples remember about Jesus?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

Memories are one of the greatest legacies we can leave our children. It's part of our joy in life today to look back on our childhood and recall the happy times we had. Maybe some memories are not pleasant, but we all have some good things to remember. It's good to think about those days, not that we want to live in the past, but that the present is a fulfillment of our past experience.

Besides being protectors, providers, disciplinarians, and instillers of ethics — parents are memory builders. Memories, in a sense, are the end product of parenthood. Our taking a look at the end product and seeing the ways we can develop it most effectively — the memories we want our children to have — will help us in our relationship with our children now.

Our everyday experiences have a great potential for being memory full. The things we remember about our childhood are not when our parents did something for us, but when we were in relationship with them — when they were present to us. Likewise, our children's fondest memories will be of the times they are listened to and understood and know they are loved. We can help make those memories happen.

Family celebrations are one way in which memories are created. Important milestones on our journey commemorate special events in our lives and the lives of others. Family life

provides abundant opportunities to celebrate and ritualize holidays, seasons, rites of passage, triumphs and tragedies.

We also establish rituals in our day-to-day family life that inject a little of the sacred into ordinary everyday events: mealtimes, bedtime, working, playing and praying. Family rituals bring a richness to life and help us to see how God enters into the everyday experience of our family.

Family memories serve as a foundation on which the next generation of family is built. And, when these memories include God, they help foster faith within the next generation.

From your own personal experience, OBSERVE:

Complete the following survey in preparation for the meeting. Use the survey for discussion at this week's meeting.

1. How important are each of the following in the life of your family? (V) Very important, (S) Somewhat important, (N) Not important.

- _____ 1. Celebrating birthdays and anniversaries.
- _____ 2. Meals together.
- _____ 3. Worshiping together.
- _____ 4. Bedtime rituals (stories, kisses, blessings, prayers).
- _____ 5. Grace at meals.
- _____ 6. Holiday preparation.
- _____ 7. Visiting relatives.
- _____ 8. Visiting friends.
- _____ 9. Family reunions.
- _____ 10. Friendship reunions.
- _____ 11. Watching TV and videos together.
- _____ 12. Family prayer together.
- _____ 13. A special time each week for the family.
- _____ 14. Regular family outings.

2. What are your earliest memories of God in your life?

3. What were the traditions and rituals that were practiced in your childhood home?

4. Ask one or two others what traditions and rituals they practiced in their family.

Each member should accept responsibility for the success of the group, come regularly and on time, and help keep ideas "on target."

In light of Christ's teachings, JUDGE:

1. How do you see God working in the day-to-day life of your family? Give examples.
2. In what way are we building warm religious memories for our children?
3. What traditions and rituals from your childhood have you incorporated into your present family life? Why? Which do you no longer use? Why?
4. What other rituals for everyday living have you established in your home? Why? What are the benefits to your family?
5. How do the memories you have of your own childhood affect your relationships with your family?
6. How are memories built?

From what has been discussed, ACT:

Choose one or more actions.

1. Celebrate a holiday or occasion as a CFM group. Include your families.
2. Prepare a ceremony for blessing your home. Do it as a family or as a group of families.
3. Develop a ritual or tradition that will enforce a value you wish to establish in your family.
4. Have a family "memories" party: go through the family photo albums; get out the videos, movies, or slides of your vacations; recall things that are in your family's museum of memories.

5. Develop your own action. Be specific.

Action to be carried out and reported on at next meeting:

Connect:

This weekend plan for your families to attend church together and then share pizza or brunch together.

Preparation for meeting 3:

1. Date _____

Time _____

Place _____

2. Turn to meeting 3. Read the Observes to prepare for the next meeting.

CLOSING PRAYER

PRAYER FOR AN ORDINARY FAMILY

Thank you, God, for an ordinary family with ordinary problems and joys. We don't seek the model marriage, the brightest children, or the best neighborhood. We are content with the gifts you have sent us—normal children, a good marriage, and satisfying work. For these, we thank you. Let your light shine through our ordinariness. Amen.

*Dolores Curran, Family Prayer,
St. Anthony Press, 1983*

Taking the Time for Relationships

GATHER AND PRAY

Prayer is a vital part of religious life. Anyone beginning a new experience of sharing in the spirit of Christ will want to become comfortable with genuine prayer. A start can be made by reciting the words of a familiar prayer. Care should be taken to let these words become your own sentiments and feeling. Spontaneous prayer from the heart of one of the group members is another good form of prayer. Everyone adding their own thought or reflections in a prayerful spirit is another good, yet simple type of prayer called shared prayer.

Each meeting should begin with a prayer led by the meeting leader or someone the group designates. It should create an atmosphere in which a prayerful Christian community can reflect on the remainder of the meeting as a genuine spiritual experience. The group may wish to begin with prayerful reflection on the "Lord's Prayer" or repeat the gathering prayer from the front cover. Take some time now to pray.

Reconnect (5-10 minutes)

Report on Actions from last meeting

Is everyone involved in the action or actions of the group? Are all taking a turn in reporting their actions? If the action was forgotten, do it in the next week.

Scripture reflection

They devoted themselves to the apostles' instruction and the communal life, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. A reverent fear overtook them all, for many wonders and signs were performed by the apostles. Those who believed shared all things in common; they would sell their property and goods, dividing everything on the basis of each other's need. They went to the temple area together every day, while in their homes they broke bread. With exultant and sincere hearts they took their meals in common, praising God and winning the approval of all people. Day to day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Acts 2:42-47

— What attracted the early Christians to this type of community?

— How does my family live Christian community?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

There is no being or becoming without relationship. From the beginning, we grow to sense the need and import of relatedness.... Our very survival seems to depend upon our relationships. In childhood, if we are denied loving encounters with human beings, we wither, fall into psychosis, idiocy, or die. As adults we continue to depend upon our interactions in togetherness for our greater joys and our most significant growth. We take this process for granted. It seems to be only in moments when we experience disconnection, times when we are severed from close relationships — either by death, divorce, or physical separations that tear our closeness apart and leave us alone — that it becomes apparent

Loving relationships, though necessary for life, health, and growth, are among the most complicated skills. Before we can be successful at achieving relationships, it is necessary that we broaden our understanding of how they work, what they mean and how what we do and believe can enhance or destroy them. We can accom-

plish this only if we are willing to put in the energy and take the time.

Leo Buscaglia, *Loving Each Other: The Challenge of Human Relationships*.
Austin, Texas: Holt Rinehart & Winston, 1984

From your own personal experience, OBSERVE:

1. What are the qualities of friendship? Answer for yourself, then ask your children and 2 or 3 others.
2. Describe the relationships you are involved in (family, work, neighborhood, church).
3. What do your family and friends do to make you feel good?
4. What do your family and friends do that you perceive as hurtful?

In light of Christ's teachings, JUDGE:

1. What is the difference between a friend and an acquaintance?
2. Spouses are friends, aren't they? Discuss.
3. How would you describe your relationship with God, a friend or an acquaintance? Discuss?
4. How well does your faith community fulfill your expectations?
5. What do you need to do to be a better friend: to God, to your spouse, to your children, to others?
6. Christ is in your neighborhood today. How would he feel about what he sees?

From what has been discussed, ACT:

1. Visit a neighbor you don't know.
2. Greet and introduce yourself to someone on the way out

of church that you see regularly.

3. Check to see if there are any "strangers" alone at a meeting you are attending and reach out.

4. Choose a relationship you would like to improve and take the steps needed to improve it (a note, a phone call, a handshake, a smile). Plan to share your results at the next meeting.

5. Develop your own action. Be specific.

Action to be carried out and reported on at next meeting:

Connect

Have a group memory party, sharing family photos and wedding pictures.

Preparation for meeting 4

1. Date _____

Time _____

Place _____

2. Turn to meeting 4. Read the Observes to be completed prior to the next meeting. Assign members to do the fact finding for Observe 6.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, we thank you for this opportunity to come together to share ideas and gain a deeper understanding of what it means to be family. We pray that your Holy Spirit will guide us in our roles as family members. Bless and watch over us until we meet again. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Taking the Time to Influence Institutions

GATHER AND PRAY

*Sit quietly and shut your eyes . . .
Imagine that Jesus is now in the room with
us and is leading us in a slow and thought-
ful prayer. Pray together that the Holy
Spirit, giver of life, will guide your discus-
sion. (The leader may choose a prayer to
initiate the spontaneous prayer.)*

Reconnect

Report on Actions from last meeting

Scripture reflection

They sent some Pharisees and Herodians to him to ensnare him in his speech. They came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man and you are not concerned with anyone's opinion. You do not regard a person's status, but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not? Should we pay or should we not?" Knowing their hypocrisy he said to them, "Why are you testing me? Bring me a denarius to look at." They brought him one and he said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" "Caesar's," they answered. So Jesus said to them, "Repay to Caesar

what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.”
They were utterly amazed at him.

Mark 12:13-17

—Take a few moments to reflect on the Scripture. The group may wish to share some of their thoughts
— When have you experienced a conflict between your convictions and what the law requires?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

...there is no going back. A new family is emerging. Parents can try to dominate, but schools, radio, movies and TV are shaping the lives of their children. The problem is not a choice between the old ways and the new. The problem is to discern the necessary and healthy forms in the new.
Gibson Winter, *Love and Conflict*,
New York: Doubleday, NY, 1957

Are kids being sold junk food? Just say no. Is TV bad? Turn it off. Are there messages about sex, drugs, violence all around? Counter the culture....

Americans once expected parents to raise their children in accordance with the dominant cultural messages. Today they are expected to raise their children in opposition. Once the chorus of cultural values was full of ministers, teachers, neighbors, leaders. Now the messengers are Madonna, rap groups and celebrities pushing sneakers. Parents are considered “responsible” only if they are successful in their resistance.

Ellen Goodman, *Family Circle Magazine*, March 14, 1995

As parents we are responsible for the development of our children. We hope to teach them values and influence their attitudes — values regarding honesty, sex, property, and money; attitudes regarding violence, human rights, and social justice. But, how much do we really influence their developing values and attitudes? And what role is played by outside influences? We hope the church influences them,

and the school. But, who else does? And how much? How about street talk? Peers? TV? Books? Movies? Videos? Video games?

Some of the influences we observe will be good—but others will not. It is difficult to eliminate most influences, but we can find ways to offset them. In fact, to help our children learn to cope with influences that will be around them, it is important to know that an influence is present and plan our parenting with it in mind.

From your own personal experience, OBSERVE:

1. Answer for yourself and ask two or three others:
 - a. At the present time, what institutions or outside influences have the greatest influence on families in general: church, school, government, television, etc.?
 - b. On your family in particular?
 - c. Are these influences primarily positive or negative?
2. Identify examples of individuals and influences that have made a positive or negative effect on the world.
3. What are the agencies, organizations, or other resources in your community that work to influence society? (Assign members to research.)

In light of Christ's teachings, JUDGE:

1. As Christians, what responsibility do we have to affect the institutions around us?
2. Which institutions or other influences do we feel should have a positive impact on our family? Why?
3. Which should we discourage? Why?
4. How can we, as individuals and as a group, affect the institutions around us?

From what has been discussed, ACT:

1. Before the next meeting take some step to improve the desirable effect or discourage the negative effect on your family of an institution identified in Judge 2 and Judge 3.
2. Propose a NO TV WEEK at your school's PTA. Develop family activities to support the plan.
3. Write a letter to the editor about one of your concerns.
4. Write to your Representative in Congress, state legislature, city council or other government body about a current issue.
5. Develop your own action. Be specific.

Action to be carried out and reported on at next meeting:

Connect

Attend a local council or school board meeting as a group to better understand how government works.

Preparation for meeting 5.

1. Date _____
 Time _____
 Place _____

2. Turn to meeting 5. Read the Observes to be completed prior to the next meeting. Assign members to do the research called for in Observe 4.

CLOSING PRAYER

You challenge us in every moment by the example of your Son, Jesus, to question the world's values. So help us, O God, to be faithful in these often maddening times, to what you would have us do. In the face of the evils which assault us and our families in the name of popular culture, give us grace not so much to rail at the wrong as to be beacons of the right, earnestly seeking your truth and striving to let it shine though us. Through the same Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Taking the Time to Reach Out to Others

GATHER AND PRAY

O Jesus, who has promised to be present in the least, last and lost: By your Holy Spirit, transport us beyond ourselves, so that we may see you and minister to you whenever and wherever you make yourself manifest. May being hospitable be as the breath of life to us. Amen.

Reconnect

Report on Actions from last meeting

Scripture reflection

"If you love only people who love you, then you will get no reward. Even the tax collectors do that. And if you are nice only to your friends, then you are no better than other people. Even the people without God are nice to their friends. So you must be perfect, the same as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Matthew 5:46-48

The New Testament English Version for the Deaf
Arlington, Texas: World Bible Translation Center Inc., 1978

- Why would Christ want us to love those whom we don't like or who don't like us?
- Who is this person in your life? (Share as comfortable.)

SOCIAL INQUIRY

Christ calls us. Indeed, He commands us: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you. So love one another that all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another." This is the mark by which all men know us as Christians.

The mark means that we must give of ourselves. There is no loving except in giving. And in giving, giving ourselves in this case, there is risk. Our gift of love may not be accepted, may not be appreciated, and may even be exploited. But we will be stronger for having given it, and others may be called forth by it. Life cannot remain the same when love has been expressed.

Francis Schaeffer, *The Mark of the Christian*
Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1970

The Lord appeared to Abraham . . . as he sat in the entrance of his tent, while the day was growing hot. Looking up, he saw three men standing nearby, . . . he said: "Sir, if I may ask you this favor, please do not go on past your servant. Let some water be brought, that you may bathe your feet, and then rest yourselves under the tree. Now that you have come this close to your servant, let me bring you a little food, that you may refresh yourselves; and afterwards you may go on your way." "Very well," they replied, "do as you have said." "Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked of him. "There in the tent," he replied. One of them said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah will then have a son."

Genesis 18:1-5, 9-10

One of the threads that runs through scripture is that it is very often the "stranger" who brings the "Good News." Yet many people allow cynicism, fear, and laziness ("I served when I was young, now it's someone else's turn") to turn them inward so that if given Sarah and Abraham's situation, they would prefer to hang out the "Do Not Disturb" sign.

From your own personal experience, OBSERVE:

1. Has anyone you didn't know ever greeted you on your way out of church? Have you greeted someone you did not know?
2. What racial/ethnic groups are part of your community: at schools, church, work, neighborhood, the wider community?
3. Prior to the meeting, drive through a declining neighborhood with your children and observe carefully the playgrounds, schools, lighting, streets, condition of the homes and their yards, etc. Report on what you observed.
- ✕ 4. Assign group members to identify organizations in your community that work to break down barriers among people.

In light of Christ's teachings, JUDGE:

- ✕ 1. If Christ were in the world today, what things would he be happy about? Unhappy about?
2. How do we distinguish for our children the dangerous stranger from the person who needs our loving concern?
3. How do I work to dispel the fears I have of those not like me?
4. How can we change "we-they" to "us"?
5. How can I help others break down barriers to community?

From what has been discussed, ACT:

1. Take a walk through your neighborhood (instead of driving); introduce yourself to a neighbor you do not know.
2. Help plan a block party.
3. Volunteer (with your family) to help out at a shelter for the homeless or similar volunteer organization serving in your community.
4. Attend services (with your family) at a church in

another neighborhood.

5. Attend (with your family) an ethnic festival of a group you do not often associate with.

6. Watch the video movie, "The Power of One." (PG-13)

7. Host a foreign exchange student, or be a host family to a foreign student attending a local college or university.

8. Develop your own action. Be specific.

Action to be carried out and reported on at next meeting:

Connect

Make Action 3, 4, 5, or 6 an activity with all of the families in the group.

Preparation for Meeting 6:

1. Date _____

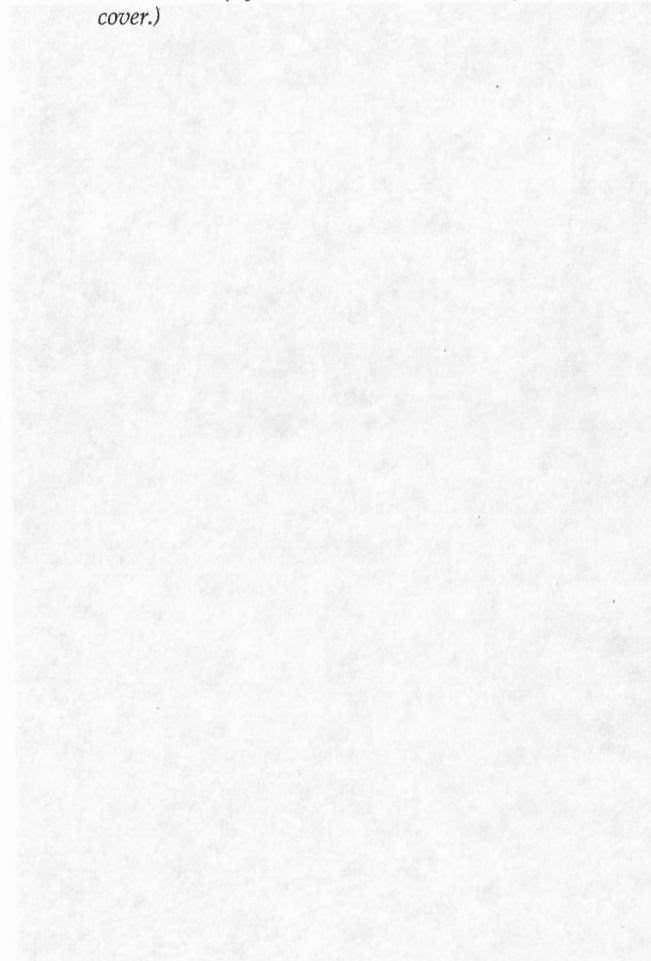
Time _____

Place _____

2. Turn to Meeting 6. Read the Observes to be prepared before the next meeting.

CLOSING PRAYER

(Make up your own or use the one on front cover.)



NOW is the Time to Make a Difference

For this meeting set a prayerful mood by placing a lit candle and basket on the table. Have pens and small pieces of paper ready. The table may have other pieces on it to represent the season in which the meeting takes place (e.g., evergreen during Advent/Christmas, dry branches during Lent, spring flowers, a fruit basket in the fall). During the reflection quiet time, the facilitator may provide quiet reflective music in the background.

GATHER AND PRAY

The reader takes the lines which change.

The group responds with the line "for his mercy endures forever."

Reader 1:

Alleluia.

*Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his Mercy endures forever.*

*Give thanks to the God of gods,
for his Mercy endures forever.*

Give thanks to the Lord of lords,

Reader 2:

*Who alone does great wonders,
for his Mercy endures forever.*

*Who made the heavens in wisdom,
for his Mercy endures forever.*

*Who spread out the earth upon the waters,
for his Mercy endures forever.*

*Who made the great lights,
for his Mercy endures forever.*

*The sun to rule over the day,
for his Mercy endures forever.*

*The moon and the stars to rule over the night,
for his Mercy endures forever.*

Reader 3:

Who smote the Egyptians in their first-born,
for his Mercy endures forever.

And brought out Israel from their midst,
for his Mercy endures forever.

With a mighty hand and an outstretched arm,
for his Mercy endures forever.

Who split the Red Sea in twain,
for his Mercy endures forever.

And led Israel through its midst,
for his Mercy endures forever.

But swept Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea
for his Mercy endures forever.

Who led his people through the wilderness,
for his Mercy endures forever.

Who smote great kings,
for his Mercy endures forever.

Sihon, king of the Amorities,
for his Mercy endures forever.

And Og, king of Bashan,
for his Mercy endures forever.

And made their land a heritage,
for his Mercy endures forever.

The heritage of Israel his servant,
for his Mercy endures forever.

Reader 4:

Who remembered us in our abjection,
for his Mercy endures forever.

And freed us from our foes,
for his Mercy endures forever.

Who gives food to all flesh,
for his Mercy endures forever.

Give thanks to the God of heaven,
for his Mercy endures forever.

Psalm 136

Note how the psalmist has recognized God's faithfulness in the many and varied events of people's lives. Reflect on how God's enduring love and mercy is written between the lines of your life as well. Ponder these moments:

the happy, joyous and freeing events,
the painful experiences and struggles,
the in-between gray moments,
the energizing, surprising discoveries,

the ongoing search for inner truth,
the enduring friendships.

On the paper provided, write your harvest of blessings from the past year, month, or weeks that you have been together in CFM. Place all the blessings in the basket on the table.

When all are finished pray together:

God, we are grateful for the treasures of loved ones whose hearts of openness and acceptance have encouraged us to be who we are.

We are grateful for the eyes of faith, for believing in the presence of God, giving us hope in our darkest days, encouraging us to listen to our spirit's hunger, and reminding us to trust in the blessings of God's presence in our most empty days.

We are grateful for the ongoing process of becoming who we are, for the seasons within, for the great adventure of life that challenges and comforts us at one and the same time.

We are grateful for the messengers of God—people, events, written and spoken words—that came to us at just the right time and helped us to grow in faith.

We are grateful for God calling us to work with our gifts, grateful that we can be of service and use our talents in a responsible and just way.

Faithful God, you have lavished us with love. Keep us mindful that you keep your promises.

Fill us with a deep sense of thanksgiving, as we experience your everlasting love. Help us to share your graciousness with all those who need a touch of generous love. AMEN.

*Adapted from May I Have This Dance?
Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, November, 1995*

Report on Actions from last meeting

Scripture Reflection

As he was walking along the Sea of Galilee he watched two brothers, Simon now known as Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea. They were fishermen. He

said to them, "Come after me and I will make you fishers of men." They immediately abandoned their nets and became his followers. He walked along farther and caught sight of two other brothers, James, Zebedee's son, and his brother John. They too were in their boat, getting their nets in order with their father, Zebedee. He called them, and immediately they abandoned boat and father to follow him.

Matthew 4:18-22

— How is my family called to follow Jesus?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

We are struck by the incredible busyness of family life that can take its toll on loving relationships. Daily we observe families overwhelmed by the demands of work, business travel, household tasks, getting to and from school, keeping appointments with doctors, civic responsibilities, and volunteering.

Both men and women can get caught up in long hours and weekends at the place of work. Balancing home and work responsibilities is a shared obligation for spouses. It is a critical issue facing families today. Where choices exist, hours on the job need to be weighted against their impact on family life.

To thrive, love requires attention, communication, and time — time to be present to another's failure or success, confusion, despair or moment of decision.

Spending time together builds intimacy, increases understanding and creates memories between husbands and wives, parents and child, brothers and sisters, grandparents and younger family members. It is hard to imagine how a family can live faithfully, be life giving, and grow mutually without deliberately choosing to spend time together.

Each generation of a family is challenged to leave the world a more beautiful and beneficial place than it inherited. You can do this, for example, when you deliberately pass on your wisdom and faith of the Church, providing counter cultural messages about poverty, consumerism, sexuality,

and racial justice — to name a few.

You also give life as a family by doing such simple things as taking a grandparent out of a nursing home for a ride, bringing meals to a sick neighbor, helping to build homes for poor people, working in a soup kitchen, recycling your goods, working to improve the schools, or joining political action on behalf of those treated unjustly.

We urge you to join with other couples and families who are making a conscious effort to follow Christ's way of love. You can find help through the Christian Family Movement (CFM), Marriage Encounter, Teams of Our lady, the New Families Movement, and your diocesan Family Life Office — to name a few.

From *Follow the Way of Love*
National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1993

From your own personal experience, OBSERVE:

1. Before the meeting, make a list of the personal goals you have for your family (spiritual, social, etc.).
2. By each goal, list ways it might be achieved.
3. List concrete ways in which participating in the past five meetings have improved the quality of your family life.
4. Report how you have used your time differently since the very first meeting.

In light of Christ's Teachings, JUDGE:

1. How have the past five meetings addressed the goals you have listed above?
2. What from the experience brings you hope for your family?
3. What does your family need to help you grow in your own faith and to pass that on to your own children?

From what has been discussed, ACT:

1. Make a commitment now to join the Christian Family Movement to continue your process of family growth and development. Assign one person to collect and mail your group's application and contribution checks to:

National Resource Center
Christian Family Movement
Box 272
Ames, Iowa 55010
(515) 232-7432

Fill out the membership application at the end of this book and attach your membership contribution check.

Your membership in CFM and your contribution support a growing ministry to marriage and family.

Your sustaining contribution entitles you to an individual annual family membership in CFM, a program book of your choice, a subscription to the ACT newsletter, and participation in regional and national conferences organized by CFM.

2. From the list of CFM program titles, choose 2 or 3 that look interesting. Someone volunteer to order examination copies from the CFM office.

3. Set a date to meet again to choose the next program book for the group.

Connect:

Plan a group social event (e.g., a pot luck) with your families.

CLOSING PRAYER

In a spirit of prayer and reflection, each person mention one blessing of the CFM experience. After each all respond: We acknowledge you God, and thank you.

When all are done, read the following together:

Dear Lord, Help us to be aware of the opportunities to take time as families, to overcome the obstacles the world puts in the way of taking that time, and to use that time to become your hands to make a difference for our own families and the families of tomorrow. Let us encourage one another to be your faithful servant and to follow your way.

CFM — Past and Present

The first CFMers

Two CFM groups emerged, almost simultaneously, in the early 1940s — one in South Bend, one in Chicago.

Burnie Bauer was a member of the first Catholic Action group started by Father Louis Putz, C.S.C., at Notre Dame. After leaving Notre Dame in 1940 and marrying Helene, he formed a Young Christian Students group. Subsequently Burnie and Helene enlarged their group to include neighboring couples and applied the Jocist Method to the common problems of young married couples trying to live Christian family lives.

In February 1942, a group of seven men began meeting in a Chicago law office, arguing and theorizing about the role of the layman in the church. Pat Crowley was a member of this group. They began to use the Jocist Method (Observe, Judge, and Act). In time this group moved into the area of husband-wife relationships and began applying this method to family life.

The next year, the seven men decided to sponsor a day of recollection for husbands and their wives. It was only one day, but out of it grew what is now known as the Cana Conference.

At about the same time, the wives had decided to form their own group. As a result of an action of the women's group, the Pre-Cana Conferences were born.

At the Cana Convention in August 1948, Helene and Burnie Bauer met Pat and Patty Crowley and the nucleus of what was to become the Christian Family Movement was formed.

Spreading the Word

Soon CFM had its own publication, ACT, contact with similar movements in other cities, and official Church recognition. In June of 1949, 59 delegates representing the movement of 11 different cities met for the first national seminar, and CFM became nation-wide. Pat and Patty Crowley were elected President Couple and continued in that position for

20 years. Within a year more than 2,500 copies of the first CFM program, "For Happier Families," were distributed and CFM began its prairie-fire spread.

CFM became so vital in the sixties that it burst forth with new ideas and new organizations over and over again.

The first was the Foundation for International Cooperation (FIC), today a separate organization that places foreign students in homes and sponsors family tours of other countries. The second was the Christian Family Mission Vacation, which enabled entire families to help the impoverished for two weeks every summer. In 1966 the International Confederation of Christian Family Movements (ICCFM) was founded, bringing families of 50 nations closer together. And then in 1968, American CFMers met, housed, and encouraged Spanish CFMers who were bringing the Marriage Encounter to the United States. During this tremendous self-expenditure of the sixties, CFM formed and released trained couples who touched thousands of lives in new family programs of inestimable value that still exist today.

CFM speaks for the family

CFMers continue to reach out. In 1975 they wrote and pilot-tested a family-oriented drug awareness program published by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The next year they helped formulate the U.S. Bishops' Call to Action document on "Family" and called for both the Year and the Decade of the family. In 1977 CFM led National Marriage Encounter and the National Council of Churches in sponsoring the first nationwide family life seminar in the country. A year later CFM couples began reaching out to the widowed, the aging, the single parent — those largely ignored by the Church then. In 1979 CFMers became involved in the White House Conference on Families, presenting eight position papers which are part of the resource library of the conference. Along with ICCFM, the movement provided in 1980 input to Pope John Paul II's synod on the family.

The 1980s were designated by the U.S. Catholic bishops as the decade of the family, and CFM accelerated its efforts to provide programming and projects for the diverse needs of families. In addition to developing annual inquiries, programs were also published for teens, the divorced and separated, the family in crisis, and middle-years families.

In 1993, the National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers (NACFLM) presented CFM with its special recognition award for enhancing the quality of life for families.

Today, CFM leaders continue to bear witness to the views and values of family life. More information about CFM and CFM program books is available from Christian Family Movement, P. O. Box 272, Ames, Iowa 50010. Contact the Christian Family Movement by e-mail at office@cfm.org or locate the movement's homepage at <http://www.cfm.org> on the World Wide Web.

THE COMMUNITY OF CFM

When you join in the Christian Family Movement you are not only joining with a few other families interested in enhancing their own family life. In the United States today there are hundreds of families who are attempting to live their Christian values through membership in the Christian Family Movement, a network of family support groups which have sprung up throughout the country. CFM helps build community. Through this community, CFM helps build family, helps build spirituality, and helps empower people to act upon their faith.

Community is more than getting together in a group. The members of a community are open to one another and united in mutual respect even when they disagree. They are willing to be honest about how they think and feel.

As people get to know each other, trust grows among them. There is a willingness to pull together for a fellow-member in need or a concern in the neighborhood. If you can work together to answer that call, community is forming.

A community learns how to laugh at its troubles, takes time to relax, play, pray, re-create its humanity, evaluate its needs and its unique direction. Many families each year find community in CFM.

The CFM group consists of five to seven families with the adults meeting two evenings a month in each other's homes. Through the use of CFM's many different programs, members discuss what they have observed in their own family or community, judge what they have seen in the light of Jesus' teaching, and then act to change things for the better.

The observe/judge/act technique is the "Jocist Method" first pioneered by Canon Joseph Cardijn, founder of the Young Christian Worker Movement in Belgium. Through the application of this method, many CFM families have become involved in helping others in such ministries as foster-parenting, prison ministry, refugee sponsorship, religious education and couple counseling.

OUTLINE OF A CFM MEETING

Opening Prayer

The group always begins with a prayer, read or sung, prepared or spontaneous.

Reconnect

The group needs to be aware of the day-to-day concerns of the members so they can offer support and assistance to each other. This time allows for members to tell what has happened in their lives since the last meeting.

Reflection

Quiet reflection and discussion help group members to step away from the ordinary pressures and distractions of the day and to focus on the issues of the meeting from a Christian perspective.

Report on Actions

Group members report on the progress of CFM actions taken individually, as a family, or by the group. This is the appropriate time to describe needs that have come to the attention of the members.

SOCIAL INQUIRY

Quotations, facts and statistics, drawn mainly from the writings and observations of experts and advocates, add perspective to the issue under discussion. These introduce the Social Inquiry which is the Observe, Judge and Act portion of the meeting, the essence of the Christian Family Movement method.

Observe

Members should "Get the facts." At this stage of the meeting, members should refrain from expressing their opinions about facts. They should try to filter out their own points of view and simply report, like any good objective reporter for a newspaper. The knowledge and experience of group members are valuable, but the

group must go beyond its own members to gather facts from the larger world and report them objectively. The chance to editorialize comes later.

Judge

To judge is not to find another person sinful or holy. For CFMers it is rather the comparison of how things are with how things should be, in accord with Gospel values. To make such a comparison requires objective observation of how things are, as well as a sincere effort to determine the teaching of Jesus. And if the group discovers — through prayer, reflection and observation — that things are not as they should be, then ways to bring about a change will come forth from the group.

Act

Actions listed in the book are suggestions. The best action comes from the group. It may be directed toward improving family life relationships, or toward the community and beyond. If action is the essence of CFM, autonomous action is its quintessence.

Look ahead to the next meeting

Set the time and the place. Preview the "Observes" to see if specific assignments are required.

Prayer

The meeting concludes with a prayer — the one suggested in the meeting or another chosen by the group or the discussion leaders.

Social time

A short social with simple and inexpensive refreshments helps members to know and understand one another better and builds community.