



## Taking the Time for Relationships

*We live in a world with many different relationships, from casual and fleeting to very intense, personal, and long-lasting ones. In this meeting, we will explore friendship, happiness, hurtfulness, and expectations and then consider simple ways to nurture our relationships.*

### **GATHERING and OPENING PRAYER**

*The leader thanks all for coming, and everyone introduces themselves. Communal prayer moves group members out of their busy lives and toward the subject matter of the meeting.*

Lord, we thank you for the people you have placed in our lives who love and nurture us, who teach us, and even those people who challenge us. We ask that you help us not take our relationships for granted, but to recognize that they are your gifts to us, essential for our own being and becoming. Amen.

### **REPORT ON ACTIONS**

*During a typical CFM meeting, group members share about the actions they decided upon at the previous meeting.*

### **SCRIPTURE REFLECTION**

*Reflection on God's Word moves members to focus on the upcoming inquiry from a Christian perspective.*

"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 (NABRE)

- How does my family live in Christian community?

## **SOCIAL INQUIRY**

*The Observe, Judge, Act Method of social inquiry structures the CFM meeting and, ultimately, the way of life for CFM members. Each CFM meeting includes short readings on the subject matter of the meeting.*

Our relationships with family and friends can be challenging, but we need each other. According to relationship specialist Leo Buscaglia, “There is no being or becoming without relationship. From the beginning, we grow to sense the need and importance 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.”

Because our relationships are so essential, Buscaglia counsels that we need to learn and develop skills for building good relationships. “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 accomplish this only if we are willing to put in the energy and take the time.”

From your personal experience, **OBSERVE:**

*The importance of the observe portion of the meeting cannot be over-emphasized. Members should look ahead and come prepared. The observe portion is researching and reporting only. Facts and information are gathered from news sources, personal experience and that of others.*

1. What are the qualities of friendship? How do you think (your) children might answer this? How about your parents?
2. Name the types of relationships we typically find ourselves in (e.g., family, work, neighborhood, church) and how much time/energy is spent on them.
3. What do your family and friends do that makes you happy?
4. What kinds of things can be perceived as hurtful among family and friends?

In light of Christ’s teachings, **JUDGE:**

*For CFMers, to judge is to compare how things are with how things should be, in accord with Gospel values. It is not assessing people, but rather circumstances. To make such a comparison requires objective observation as well as a sincere effort to understand the teachings of Jesus.*

1. What is the difference between a friend and an acquaintance?
2. Spouses are friends, aren't they?
3. How would you describe your relationship with God, is God a friend or an acquaintance?
4. How well does your faith community fulfill your expectations of relationships?
5. What do you need to do to be a better friend: to God, to your spouse, to your children, to others?

From what has been discussed, **ACT:**

*Based on the discussion, members choose an action to bring about positive change. Actions can be as an individual, family, or group. Actions listed here are suggestions only. The best actions come from the group as a result of the discussion. Group members occasionally choosing the same act increases unity and impact.*

1. Visit a neighbor you don't know.
2. Greet and introduce yourself to someone on the way out of church.
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. Take the steps needed to improve it
5. Develop your own action. Be specific.

#### **AT HOME/DISCUSS AS A FAMILY**

*Simple questions are provided at the end of each social inquiry meeting to facilitate carrying the conversation into the home with children and other family members.*

1. Have a family meeting to discuss the difference between acquaintances and friends. Use personal stories to help illustrate the difference.
2. Make a prayer journal, and include the names of friends for whom you want to pray.

#### **CLOSING PRAYER**

*A closing prayer is supplied for each meeting. This is also a good time to offer prayers for the intentions of the group.*

Lord, we thank you for this opportunity to share ideas and gain a deeper understanding of what it means to be a member of a family as well as a friend. May your Holy Spirit guide us in our responsibility to love our families and take time to build strong relationships. Bless and watch over us until we meet again. Amen.

And let us pray the Prayer for the Christian Family Movement:

Holy Trinity, you are a family. We believe you wish our families to reflect your heavenly community. Jesus has called us to family ministry and asked his heavenly Father not to take us from the world, but to deliver us from evil. And so, we pray for the Christian Family Movement, that present members may grow in grace and that new families may join us. Through good example and prayer, may our homes become that which you desire them to be: true domestic churches, temples of your glory, and schools of humanity, ushering in the reign of God. Amen.



### **NEXT STEPS**

Hopefully, in this meeting you have seen how discussing a topic through the lens of family can help you grow faith and friendship. We invite you and your friends to join CFM and continue the journey together. Please contact our National Office to receive guidance on the next steps in starting your action group and to register as members of the Christian Family Movement.

### **CFM NATIONAL OFFICE**

Lauri Przybysz, D.Min., Executive Director

Email: [director@cfm.org](mailto:director@cfm.org)

Phone: 800-581-9824



### **WORKS CITED**

Scripture quotations are from *New American Bible*, revised edition (NABRE), Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C., 2010.

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