

Being a True Neighbor

Using the story of the Good Samaritan, explore who are our neighbors and how even simple acts of kindness can make a difference in their lives and ours.

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.

Jesus, we thank you for allowing us to be in your presence now. Increase our awareness of your Spirit active in our daily lives. Help us to see you in the faces of anyone who needs our kindness. May we also recognize you in those who take the time to be kind to us. 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.

(A scholar of the law asked Jesus) "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So, likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed mercy on him." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

- Luke 10:30-37 (NABRE)

- Why is the Good Samaritan a favorite story of the Bible?
- What does this parable show about being a true neighbor?

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.

Do not underestimate the power of goodness to change hearts. Indeed, kindness can change the world. True kindness is about actions – doing works of mercy and relieving the pain of others, like the Samaritan in the Gospel. In his book, *The Healing Power of Kindness*, Jean Maalouf describes his belief in the lasting effects of each kind thought, word, and deed. “Every thought pondered, every work uttered, and every deed performed counts. Nothing is lost. Good or bad, nothing dissipates in the void. Everything is recorded in the human brain and heart and into eternity.”

Everyone benefits from kindness, not only the immediate recipient of the action. Maalouf reminds us that the effects of a kind action spread because we are interconnected: “In the holy of holies of our being, we feel connected, centered, involved, engaged, and deeply bonded to others, regardless of our divisions due to ideology, religion, race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, economic status, or other factors. After all, we are all made of flesh, bones, and blood. We belong to one human family.”

From your own 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, your own personal experience and that of others.

1. Tell another story of a “good Samaritan” that you have seen in a book, in the newspaper, or on the internet.
2. Tell about a time when you were helped by a Good Samaritan or were a Good Samaritan. How did this affect you?
3. Tell what you know about the organizations that show kindness and hospitality to others in your community (e.g., soup kitchens, county hospitals, shelters, interim housing, or the Travelers’ Aid Society).

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 limits your acts of kindness?

2. Why is it sometimes difficult to accept another's kindness to you?
3. Who might we find ourselves avoiding when needs become apparent and why (e.g., persons who are in the country illegally, are homeless, are addicted, with a homosexual orientation, have committed crimes, or who have mental health problems)?

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. Review your family financial plan for spending and charitable giving. Commit to increasing your tithing.
2. Decide on an act of kindness you can do for one other person in your family or community.
3. Visit the *Random Acts of Kindness* website, <http://www.actsofkindness.org> for ideas and inspiration for action.
4. Plan a group act of kindness for others who serve you (e.g., teachers, health care workers, police or fire fighters, priests and church personnel, childcare workers).

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. Read the story of the Good Samaritan as a family and discuss it.
2. Have a family meeting to determine an act of kindness each person can do.
3. Ask your children and/or parents, about a time they were helped by a Good Samaritan or were a Good Samaritan. How did this affect them?
4. Research volunteer opportunities at your parish, school, or community.

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, give us the humility to accept freely the kindness of others and the courage to be your hands and feet in this world, spreading your kindness and ours to those in need. Amen.

Now, 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 in 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

Phone: 800-581-9824



WORKS CITED

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

Maalouf, Jean, *The Healing Power of Kindness*. Twenty-third Publications, 2003.