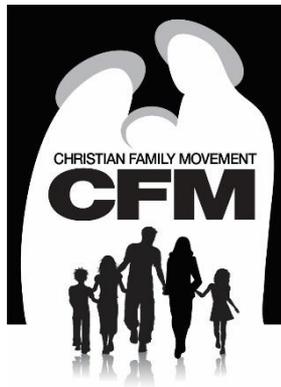


For Happier Families

Introduction to CFM

Leader Guide



*Christian
Family
Movement*



For Happier Families Leader Guide

*An Inquiry Book
Published by the
Christian Family Movement*

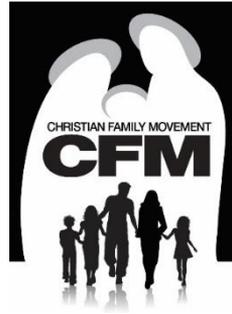
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<http://www.cfm.org> e-mail: director@cfm.org

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The Mission of the Christian Family Movement is:



- To promote Christ-centered marriage and family life;
- To help individuals and their families to live the Christian faith in everyday life; and
- To improve society through actions of love, service, education and example.

Starting a CFM group is easy

1. Coordinate your efforts with your pastor and parish staff. Keep them informed about your CFM group. Point them to the Videos by experienced CFM pastors on the website, <https://www.cfm.org/videos>.
2. Invite three couples or individuals who want to grow in their faith to your home for a 90-minute meeting. You can have a few more members in your group, whatever your living room comfortably holds.
3. We recommend beginning with our starter book, *For Happier Families*. You may choose any one of CFM's other Program Books, if they meet your needs as a group. Descriptions may be found on the Program Books page of the CFM website. https://www.cfm.org/program_books. Order program books from the National office, or download digital books from the CFM website.
4. After you have your group identified and you have ordered program books, schedule the first meeting in your home

(preferred) or a parish meeting room. Decide if you want to provide babysitting for children and make arrangements.

5. Provide a welcoming atmosphere at the meeting. Start and end on time. Offer simple refreshments for a social time at the conclusion of the meeting. Before the meeting, you may want to view a video about the Christian Family Movement at this link: <https://www.cfm.org/videos>.
6. Invite people to make a donation of \$10 per family as new members. Donations are encouraged but not required for becoming a member. They can join online at <http://www.cfm.org/join-renew> or download a paper form.
7. Contact the National Office via phone 800-581-9824 or email office@cfm.org to request your membership materials and ideas for growing and leading your group.
8. Leader support is available at no cost. Experienced CFM leaders will be happy to talk with you at your convenience to guide you. We are a network of families helping families live their Christian vocation to marriage and family life. To talk with an experienced CFMer, contact director@cfm.org.

Frequently Asked Questions about CFM

What makes CFM different from other small faith communities or study groups?

CFM is unique because it is peer ministry – lay men and women invite their friends to join them in a faith building and family enriching experience. The group does not require a parish staff facilitator, but clergy are welcome to participate. CFM involves the whole family. Adults meet to plan ways to include their children in the actions and social events they organize at their meetings. CFM members become part of a network of families all over the world who are living their faith in action. CFM teaches members to see themselves as a vital part of the Body of Christ, engaging them in the mission of Jesus.

Why Join CFM?

Since Christian Family Movement is a membership organization and not a publisher, we ask that people join as members and renew their membership annually. The Program Books are provided as a benefit of membership, along with the monthly *ACT* e-newsletter, plus other optional resources for family life.

Is everyone welcome to join?

New members should be regularly welcomed into a CFM group. They may be young parents, married couples, families with single parents, or grandparents. Mixed-church families are welcome. CFM program materials lend themselves to all kinds of groups.

Involving the kids?

Some groups meet only with the adults, and during the meeting the members plan actions that include the whole family at another time. Some groups have a babysitter present at their meetings to oversee children as they play nearby. Some groups

plan activities for children during their meeting that relate to the adult discussion topic. Whether or not children accompany their parents to the CFM meeting, adults learn how to continue the discussion at home and include their children in their actions of education, service, and prayer.

How is CFM a "movement"?

The vision of CFM is to move people to action. CFM at its heart is reaching out to new people, not only staying as a devoted small group of friends. CFM does not necessarily have to be a long-term ongoing commitment. Instead, CFM can be a seasonal or time-limited experience of faith formation that connects families with others in their life-situations and teaches them how to Observe their lives and society, Judge how Christians should respond, and then put their faith into practice.

What is CFM's Spirituality?

CFM's spirituality is the observe/judge/act technique, the "Jocist Method," first pioneered by Cardinal 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. "Jocist" refers to the French word for "youth."

Cardinal Cardijn said, "For me, laymen are not formed ... through books, purely theoretical teaching or spoken lectures however magnificent, or even through discussions.... Laymen are formed first of all by the discovery of facts, followed by a Christian judgment, resulting in the actions they plan, the plans they carry into effect, and the responsibilities they shoulder."

Pope John XXIII, in his first encyclical, *Mater et Magistra*, affirms the process of See, Judge, Act as a way of reading and responding to the signs of the times:

"There are three stages which should normally be followed in the reduction of social principles into

practice. First, one reviews the concrete situation; secondly, one forms a judgement on it in the light of these same principles; thirdly, one decides what the circumstances can and should be done to implement these principles. These are the three stages that are usually expressed in the three terms: observe, judge act."

Is CFM just for Catholics?

CFM program materials are Catholic and are inclusive of interchurch families. Since meetings are held in the home environment, CFM is a comfortable setting for mixed faith couples to discover ways to express and act on the values they have in common. Children witness a unity of purpose in their parents. Each member is encouraged to deepen his or her relationship with God. The Christian Family Movement is a concrete expression of the family as "domestic church" in which members live their faith actively.

The U.S. Catholic Bishops recommend CFM in their documents, *Follow the Way of Love* and *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium*, as well as in their planning materials for the National Pastoral Initiative on Marriage. CFM is a member of the National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers, NACFLM.

How does CFM build up the Church?

CFM members who do not move into leadership roles go on to become active in other parish or community ministries. They are launched. Many, many people who are now active in ministry in the Catholic community – both lay and ordained -- got their start in a CFM experience.

What happens at a CFM meeting?

We recommend once or twice a month, more frequently when you are getting organized. Meetings are about two hours, including social time.

Members gather in each other's homes, as frequently as weekly or once a month. Some groups meet at the parish. Beginning with prayer and reflection on the Scripture, they discuss topics of interest to people committed to Christian family life. Some groups meet as adults only; some bring their children along.

The group organizers facilitate the meeting when the group is new. After everyone has some experience, the meeting hosts can take a turn facilitating the discussion. Their task is to keep the meeting moving, not to serve as teachers or know all the answers. The Program Book and Leader Guide provide ample instructions.

After each CFM meeting, the members enjoy social time and follow through on their discussion with some action, as individuals, as families, as groups, or in cooperation with a parish or community organization. Our goal is to be missionary disciples of Jesus who take concrete action for his mission.

See Tips for the Leader, page 12.

For ideas for group service projects and social events, visit https://www.cfm.org/action_ideas

What's Next?

After your group finishes with *For Happier Families*, you can choose from CFM's list of additional program books. A list is on the CFM website, https://www.cfm.org/program_books. CFM produces an annual Program Book.

Themes for annual programs include parenting issues, Christian values, family spirituality, and social concerns. Each meeting is written from the lived experience of CFM members themselves, under the direction of professional Catholic family life ministers and educators and approved by CFM's national spiritual advisor.

The CFM Meeting Format

GATHERING AND OPENING PRAYER – The group always begins with a prayer, read or sung, prepared or spontaneous.

ACTIVITIES - *suggested but not required*

Simple ideas are included at the beginning of each chapter of *For Happier Families*. These activities are optional and can be used by adults and children, either during the meeting or at home. More ideas for creative projects may be found at www.cfm.org.

REPORT ON ACTIONS – (5 -10 minutes) 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 in your family, parish or community that have come to the attention of the members.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION – (15-20 minutes) Quiet reflection followed by discussion about the scripture helps group members to step away from the ordinary pressure and distractions of the day and begin to focus on the issues of the meeting from a Christian perspective.

SOCIAL INQUIRY – (60 -90 minutes) The Social Inquiry (Observe and Judge and Act) is the heart of the CFM meeting.

The importance of this section of the meeting cannot be over-emphasized. Unless the group reports objective facts during the discussion, the meeting will not lead to action.

OBSERVE – The world around you. Gather information from your community or from your own personal experience. Often facts can be opinions of others, too. At this stage of the meeting, members should refrain from expressing their opinions about facts. 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 – In light of Christ’s teachings, judge. In the Judge part of the meeting, the group decides by discussion whether the observed situation or topic is in line with Gospel values and what Christ would want us to do. The group should try to refer only to the information observed.

ACT - To make a difference. Members choose an action to bring “the way things are” more in line with “the way things should be.” The best actions come from the group as a result of the discussion. Actions in the program book are just suggestions. An action may be done as an individual, a couple, a family, a small group, or a parish. The key is to take something away from the meeting and resolve to do something to live out the Gospel in your everyday life.

LOOK AHEAD TO THE NEXT MEETING – Set the time and place. Aim to meet twice a month.

AT HOME, DISCUSS AS A FAMILY - Ideas for continuing the conversation with family members and involving everyone in action projects.

CLOSING PRAYER – The meeting concludes with a prayer. The program book usually has a suggested prayer or another may be chosen by the group or the discussion leaders. Alternatively, a member of the group might lead a spontaneous prayer.

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

Tips for the Leader

1. We recommend that you meet weekly or twice a month until your group is well established, if possible.
2. Once you determine the best time for your group to meet, decide on meeting dates for the year and send /email them to your members in advance. Calendars fill up quickly!
3. A week before each meeting send out a reminder email with host's contact information, a reminder of the topic and page number of the next meeting, and any preparation that is needed before they arrive.
4. As your group's leader, you may also be the one to facilitate your meetings. To help you facilitate, read through the chapter's leader guide before the meeting and remember that we are here to help! We are a network of families helping families live their Christian vocation to marriage and family life. To talk with an experienced CFMer, contact director@cfm.org.
5. Start on time and end on time. Remember the social time after the discussion is also important for the building of community...and relaxing! If the discussion goes too long it will mean less social time.
6. Be aware of the time and "keep it rolling" in order to progress from OBSERVES to JUDGES to ACTS...the whole sequence is the CFM meeting. If you're spending more time on one question, call a "time out" to get on track or skip a question or two to keep things moving.
7. Don't be afraid of silence. Often people need time to organize their thoughts before they respond. Leave time for this to happen. Try to stick to the questions. If a really good side discussion happens, encourage people to continue it during social time.

Tips for the Host

1. Many CFM groups rotate hosting the meeting each month. The host may also facilitate the meeting (see “tips for leaders,” above).
2. Keep refreshments simple. Provide beverages (soft drinks, coffee, tea) and a snack. Some groups serve dessert after the meeting, while other groups start the meeting with a supper.
3. If you have children, try to involve them in the preparation for the meeting. The night of the meeting, ask them to help welcome everyone, help take coats, or put out the snacks.

Tips for New Members

1. Review the CFM Group Agreement – page 63.
2. Prepare to participate well in the meetings by doing the "Observe" questions and following through with "Actions" that you have chosen to do.
3. Think about who you can bring along to the next CFM meeting.
4. Check out <http://www.cfm.org> to learn more!

How to Use

For Happier Families Leader Guide

CFM members develop skills of observing a situation, using good judgment about what needs to be done to improve it, and deciding to take action. The *Program Leader Guide* is not intended to "give the answers" or replace the observations and judgements of the participants. The *Leader Guide* can help leaders prepare to facilitate the meetings. It offers some supplemental resources and to "prime the pump" for the discussion during the meeting.

[Leader Guide notes and resources in each meeting appear in this distinctive text color and size.](#)

Access the Leader Guide online at
www.cfm.org/leader_guides

Leader Guide Features:

- Explains why the Scripture passage was chosen and provides a short summary/paraphrase of reading and includes historical background, and theological definitions, as needed.
- Suggests possible responses to the Reflection, Observe, and Judge questions, to promote conversation.
- Paraphrases the Social Inquiry material for the leader, provides relevant background information, current statistics, and definitions of words, if necessary.
- Points out possible ways the conversation can get off track and provide ways to get back to the theme of the meeting.
- Adds additional reference material that may be brought up to facilitate discussion.

ONE

Your Family, Loved by God

Page 9 in Participants' Book

*Leader's note: It is wise to make a pre-meeting contact with all the families. When you call the families to confirm their attendance, share the Observe items with them. **Note that the second Observe asks them to bring an item to “show and tell.”***

ACTIVITY - Name Tags Introductions

Have supplies to make nametags available, especially if the group is new or has new members. If you wish, supply colored paper, markers, crayons, etc. Each person makes a name tag for him or herself. On your name tag, draw or write two things that you really like to do.

Explain your name tag to someone in the group, particularly someone you do not know. Introduce one another to the others in the group. Tell one thing you learned about him or her.

GATHER

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, your holy word tells us that if we draw near to God, He will draw near to us. Lord, we seek your presence. Be with us now. Jesus, you said that where two or three are gathered in your name, there you are with them. So, we gather in your name now in the Christian Family Movement. Bless us, Lord, and bless all the members of CFM throughout the world. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful. Enlighten our minds and inspire our hearts. Make us a community characterized by friendship and peace. Amen.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

The Scriptures provide a foundation for the discussion in the meeting and inspire us to see with eyes of faith and discern how to act in our daily lives as Jesus would.

“If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him? Who will bring a charge against God’s chosen ones? It is God who acquits us. Who will condemn? It is Christ [Jesus] who died, rather, was raised, who also is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? As it is written: “For your sake we are being slain all the day; we are looked upon as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

- Romans 8: 31-39, New American Bible

As we read St. Paul's letter to the early Church in Rome, we should recall that even today Christians are suffering some of the same hardships and persecution around the world on account of their faith.

1. How have you experienced God’s promised care for you and your family in daily life?

For example: We were blessed to have good friends who stood by us when others did not understand or during a job loss or illness; an accident was avoided because of a warning; a broken relationship was healed; someone patiently waited for us to change.

2. Who (someone you have known) has been an agent of God’s care for you?

The basic elements of a CFM meeting are OBSERVE, JUDGE, and ACT. The members of the group OBSERVE some aspect of

life around them, JUDGE what they see in light of Christ's teachings, and agree to ACT as they think necessary.

SOCIAL INQUIRY

Each meeting includes some background to consider before we share what we have observed.

In a homily to families, Pope Francis said, "Dear families, the Lord knows our struggles: he knows them. He knows the burdens we have in our lives. But the Lord also knows our great desire to find joy and rest! Do you remember? Jesus said, that your joy may be complete" (cf. Jn 15:11). Jesus wants our joy to be complete! He said this to the apostles and today he says it to us. Here, then, is the first thing I would like to share with you this evening, and it is a saying of Jesus: Come to me, families from around the world - Jesus says - and I will give you rest, so that your joy may be complete. Take home this Word of Jesus, carry it in your hearts, and share it with the family. It invites us to come to Jesus so that he may give this joy to us and to everyone."

The Holy Father continued, "Dear families, you, too, are a part of God's people. Walk joyfully in the midst of this people. Remain ever close to Jesus and carry him to everyone by your witness. I thank you for having come here. Together, let us make our own the words of Saint Peter, words which strengthen us and which will confirm us in times of trial: 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of everlasting life' (Jn 6:68). With the help of Christ's grace, live the joy of faith! May the Lord bless you, and may Mary, our Mother, protect you and be ever at your side. Thank you!"

The Christian Family Movement has been dedicated to evangelizing families for more than 60 years. We are inspired by the words of one of our founders, Cardinal Joseph Cardijn: “The family is almost the most beautiful image of the union uniting Christ and the Church — the union of Christ with the Church makes the church fruitful and makes the Church increase. It is true of every family, whether black or yellow or white; and it is not merely true of Christian families but of any family.” – *On the Family and Its Mission*, 1950

From your personal experience, OBSERVE:

OBSERVES are facts, for example what is happening in society, in a situation either public or personal – they are meant to be presented objectively. The opinions of the group about the facts and the discussion of the facts should wait to be voiced during the JUDGE section of the meeting.

1. When and where do the members of your family gather joyfully?
2. Bring (or tell about) an item from your home that holds good memories for you and your family.

Examples: Photos, special clothes, a game or toy, a plant, a food item, a craft made by a grandparent, a musical instrument or song

3. On what occasions do you and your family turn to God?

Such as illness or distress, but also times of rejoicing and celebration. Be sure that ordinary times of play and work are included along with church or religious observances.

In light of Christ’s teachings, JUDGE:

In the JUDGE part of the meeting the group determines by discussion whether the situation observed is in line with Christian principles.

1. How was God present in the family story you shared during the Observes?

Possible: We felt peaceful; a person showed us a loving attitude; we experienced renewed confidence; a friendship was born.

2. How might someone's experience of family affect the way he or she approaches God and church?

Loving parents mirror God's love; broken relationships at home or an experience of rejection might lead one to not trust others; a non-religious upbringing could limit one's appreciation of spiritual life.

3. What are the greatest challenges your family faces as it strives to bring Christ to the world?

Possible: Lack of supportive friends who know Christ; indifferent attitudes of others; hostile responses from those who are turned off to religion; scandals surrounding church; lack of education about our faith; distractions of a busy life

4. How does your family unite with the larger Church? Why is this important?

Sunday worship; learning about how other cultures pray and celebrate; liturgical seasons and holiday customs. We need a supportive community to back us up in living our values and paying attention to how the Holy Spirit is at work.

Based on what has been discussed, ACT:

Remember, the suggested actions are just that, suggestions. Certainly, 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.

1. Think of someone in your family, neighborhood or parish who could benefit from the loving embrace of you and your family. Invite him or her for a visit or to join your CFM group.
2. Set aside time as a family to affirm one another, bless one another and be a support to one another.

Such as: dinnertime, bedtime, times of leaving or returning home

3. If the family is the microcosm of the church, one could say that the kitchen in each home is the sanctuary. Do something to beautify your kitchen, or plan a fun discussion or family game night to be held at the family dinner table. Pray the blessing on your kitchen table (found on page 57).
4. As a group, plan a night of activities for members of your parish where they interact with other families. Share your plan at the next meeting.

Visit Action Ideas on the CFM Webpage:
https://www.cfm.org/action_ideas

Our Action to be carried out and reported at the next meeting

AT HOME, DISCUSS AS A FAMILY

Each meeting includes a few questions to spark discussion with family members at home. This optional activity extends the CFM experience to children and continues the conversation.

1. What makes you really joyful?
2. Who do you know that needs to feel the love of Jesus?
3. What object in your home is especially meaningful to you? Why?

LOOK AHEAD TO THE NEXT MEETING

Take a look at the Observes for the next meeting to see what needs to be done in preparation. Share contact information: names, home addresses, phone numbers and email addresses. Everyone should take a turn hosting a meeting and facilitating a meeting. Simple refreshments can be provided by the host family, another family, or everyone can bring something to share. Be sure and let the host family know whether you can attend the upcoming meeting.

Date _____

Time _____

Place _____

CLOSING PRAYER:

If children have come to the meeting with their parents, gather them to join you in the closing prayer.

Prayer for the Christian Family Movement

(also found on the inside back cover of participants' book)

Holy Spirit, 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.

TWO

Using Time Faithfully

Page 15 in Participants' Book

ACTIVITY – Heart Values Poster

Make a heart shaped poster showing the values that you want to pass on and that lie at the heart of your family. This activity is optional. Families can use it at the meeting or at home.

GATHER

OPENING PRAYER

This day, as every day, our thoughts turn to you, O Lord,
And our desire is to serve you joyfully.
With gladness, we consecrate this day to you
And offer whatever joys and sacrifices may come our way.
Thank you for the graces you will send,
All the love, all the beauty,
And all the ways you will answer our prayers.
Take our hearts, and minds and strength, O Lord,
That this day may be truly lived for your greater honor and
glory.
Amen.

REPORT ON ACTIONS

Take time to report on how you engaged in action as a result of the last meeting. It is encouraging to hear what others are doing and prompts us to put our faith into practice more intentionally.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

“So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

- Matthew 6:31-35, New American Bible

We are given a limited time to live our lives and do good while we can. Such a gift comes with responsibility. We need to use our time wisely

- How is it possible as members of a contemporary family to adhere to Jesus’s admonition to not worry about what we are to eat, drink, or wear?

Possible responses: This may require some lifestyle changes; we need to keep practicing; we need to make friends with people who are also trying to follow Jesus and support each other.

“Since on the seventh day God was finished with the work he had been doing, he rested on the seventh day from all the work he had undertaken. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work he had done in creation.”

- Genesis 2:2-3, New American Bible

- How does God set the pace for the way that we should use our time?

Sunday observance is a good place to start our lifestyle change. This means worshiping as a family, avoiding unnecessary work on the Sabbath, gathering with friends and family to relax and re-create.

SOCIAL INQUIRY

“Efficiency and effectiveness are not the same. Someone who works hard and is well organized but spends all their time on unimportant tasks may be efficient but not effective. To be

effective, you need to decide what tasks are urgent and important and to focus on these. This is called prioritizing. It's important to list the tasks you have and to sort these in order of priority, and then to devote most time to the most important tasks. This avoids the natural tendency to concentrate on the simple, easy tasks and to allow too many interruptions to your work.... Differentiate also between urgent and important tasks: an urgent task may not necessarily be important.” - University of Kent Careers and Employability Service, “How to Manage Your Time Effectively”

“(M)ost families feel that they lack the time to be the kind of families they want to be. Even if families commit to work for the common good, they also need time for themselves.

...Children today also see their grandparents, aunts, and uncles less because of increased mobility. Parents see their teenage sons and daughters less because more of them work part-time. Husbands and wives find it harder to take time for each other. Most agree that more time would help them and others to be better families.... Some changes are already occurring. The government has finally made twelve weeks of unpaid family leave a given for large businesses, and more employers offer flextime, job sharing, or reduced hours for reduced pay; ...others choose to work part-time or downsize into less demanding jobs because they want more time with those they love most.” - Julie Hanlon Rubio

From your personal experience, OBSERVE:

1. Over the course of approximately three days, keep track of how you spend your time and roughly about how much time you spent doing it.
2. Take time to share the list and the time sheet with your spouse. Bring it to the meeting.
3. What did family members spend time doing together? How much of your time was spent with members of your family? Identify those activities that you most truly enjoy doing.

In light of Christ’s teachings, JUDGE:

1. As a couple, as an individual, and as a parent, what would we like to change about our use of time? Why?
2. As a CFM group, how do we benefit when we take time to share our experiences with each other?
3. In what ways could the activities that most engage you be used to benefit others?
4. How does our use of time reflect our Christian values?

Based on what has been discussed, ACT:

1. After reviewing your timesheets; identify some tasks that are unimportant that you can eliminate to make room for things you hold in higher priority.
2. As you plan your schedule, make room for those activities you truly enjoy and which can also benefit others.
3. If possible, gather your children (even if it means Skyping) and plan a special family time together.
4. Couples, evaluate your free time and commit to a regular “date” time with your spouse.
5. Make the Heart Values poster described in the Activity, and share with the group.

Our Action to be carried out and reported at the next meeting

AT HOME, DISCUSS AS A FAMILY

Each meeting includes a few questions to spark discussion with family members at home. This optional activity extends the CFM experience to children and continues the conversation.

1. What is your best memory of a time we shared as a family this year?

2. Tell us about a time you felt like you had accomplished something important.
3. How can you tell when you are using your time like God wants you to do?

LOOK AHEAD TO THE NEXT MEETING

Take a look at the Observes for the next meeting to see what needs to be done in preparation.

Date _____

Time _____

Place _____

If children have come to the meeting with their parents, gather them to join you in the closing prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER

For quiet moments and bursts of joy, we thank you, Lord.

For hours of solitude and afternoons of companionship, we thank you, Lord.

For days of rain and days of sunshine, we thank you, Lord.

For weeks of work and weeks of play, we thank you, Lord.

For seasons of flowers and seasons of snow, we thank you, Lord.

For all our years, for time itself, we thank you, Lord.

Amen.

And let us pray for the Christian Family Movement.

(The Prayer for CFM is found on the inside back cover.)

THREE

Making Family Memories

Page 21 in Participants' Book

ACTIVITY – Prayer Candle or Prayer Book

Decorate a prayer candle or design a cover for a CFM group prayer intentions book. This activity is optional. Families can do the activities during the meeting or at home.

GATHER

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the cherished gift of our families. We pray that you may bless our families so that they become true communities of love and witnesses to the Gospel. May your grace inspire us, as fathers and mothers, to be attentive to your call and to respond in love and faithfulness when we hear your voice. Guide us to make our homes sanctuaries for our children to learn to know, love, and serve you. Through the intercession of the Holy Family, grant that our family will be a sign of your loving presence in the world. Amen.

REPORT ON ACTIONS

Take time to report on how you engaged in action as a result of the last meeting. It is encouraging to hear what others are doing and prompts us to put our faith into practice more intentionally.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

“The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled underfoot and the birds of the air ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky soil, and as

soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out. Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great.”

- Luke 8: 5-8, New American Bible

• What is the good soil of family life?

Possible responses: Uncluttered schedules and living spaces, peaceful words, celebrating family customs, kind actions, attention to spirituality, telling stories about our ancestors, spending quality time together

SOCIAL INQUIRY

“Traditions give the family stability and a feeling of belonging. Values and beliefs are often reinforced through our traditions. Through the passing of time, we learn the unspoken message of why traditions are created, FAMILY IS IMPORTANT.”

- Millie Kaiser, et al., *Family Rituals and Traditions*

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. Good memories help keep us positive and nurture the faith of the next generation.

From your own experience, OBSERVE

1. Consider the sources of your family memory-making. When are these events or activities a part of your family's experience?

(C) consistently, (F) frequently, (O) occasionally, (R) rarely, (N) never.

_____ 1. Celebrating birthdays and anniversaries

_____ 2. Meals together

_____ 3. Worshiping together

_____ 4. Bedtime rituals

_____ 5. Holidays

_____ 6. Visiting relatives

_____ 7. Visiting friends

_____ 8. Playing games

_____ 9. Vacationing

_____ 10. Watching television together

_____ 11. Family prayer

_____ 12. Evenings with nothing else scheduled

_____ 13. Regular family outings

_____ 14. Hosting others in your home

_____ 15. Reading together

_____ 16. Other: _____

2. What were rituals and traditions practiced in your childhood home? How would you have filled out the above survey differently?

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

4. Recall a time when a specific experience of family life prompted you to feel the presence of God.

In light of Christ's teachings, JUDGE

1. Given the survey from above, what makes these occasions memorable?

Possible: We spent time together; we learned from others; we listened with our heart; we learned to appreciate our own gifts.

2. Why have you incorporated some traditions and rituals from your childhood but not others? How have you established others that benefit your family?

Families may start a "tradition" by just doing something simple together. It could make us want to experience the good feelings every year. It is not about spending lots of money.

3. How have your early memories of God shaped your later views of your faith?

4. In what ways can a family build powerful memories that promote the growth of faith, virtue, and love?

It helps to have friends to accompany us and make memories with us. Doing something to help others can be the most satisfying.

Based on what has been discussed, ACT

1. Begin to create an album or scrapbook that chronicles your most cherished family memories; let each family member choose pieces for it.
2. Identify a feast day of the church, possibly for a favorite saint, and institute a family tradition celebrating it. Include other families in your celebration.
3. Make the Prayer Candle or Prayer Intentions Book described at the start of this chapter as a group or as a family. Or other activity chosen by the group.

4. Invite another family, perhaps newcomers to the parish, to join you for breakfast or at a fun event.
5. Adopt a new family ritual that will bring you closer to each other and to God. Perhaps one from your family of origin.

Our Action to be carried out and reported at the next meeting

AT HOME, DISCUSS AS A FAMILY

1. What makes our family celebrations special?
2. What is your favorite memory of our family being together?

LOOK AHEAD TO THE NEXT MEETING

Take a look at the Observes for the next meeting to see what needs to be done in preparation.

Date _____

Time _____

Place _____

If children have come to the meeting with their parents, gather them to join you in the closing prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER

Mary and Joseph, just like you, we are a part of God's family. Help our family to be holy. We pray that our actions reflect our commitment to our family and to those you have given us to love.

May we grow in understanding God's love for us, so that it might flow through us. Keep us joyful as we serve others. We know that whatever we do for our brothers and sisters, we do for God. Mary and Joseph, pray for us that we might have the strength and courage to be true disciples of your Son.

Help us to say "yes," even when faced with the difficulties of our daily lives. Keep us attentive to God's promptings, that we might know his will and be ready to answer his call. Amen.

And let us pray for the Christian Family Movement (on the inside back cover).

FOUR

Caring for Our Relationships

Page 27 in Participants' Book

ACTIVITY -- Sharing Plate

Embellish a paper, plastic, or ceramic plate with markers, glitter, stickers, etc. Pass it around during a family meal to take turns telling about your day.

GATHER

OPENING PRAYER

Prayer of St. Francis (said or sung)

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; and 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, and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life. Amen.

REPORT ON ACTIONS

Is everyone involved in the action or actions of the group? If the action was forgotten, do it in the next week.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

“If there is any encouragement in Christ, any solace in love, any participation in the Spirit, any compassion and mercy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing. Do nothing out of

selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but [also] everyone for those of others. Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.” - Philippians 2: 1-8, New American Bible

- What skills do people need to live together in the Christian community?

St. Paul recommends compassion, mercy, being of the same mind, united in heart, humble, patient, selfless. This will require sacrifice.

“As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.”

- John 15: 9-14, New American Bible

- How is God’s love for us like the love we have for our spouse and family?

God never gives up on us; whatever our mistakes, we stay connected and work for reconciliation.

SOCIAL INQUIRY

“God’s revelation through Jesus emphasizes relationships, especially his central commandment to love God and our neighbor as ourselves. That love relationship with each other and God is built into human nature. It’s central to attaining our eternal reward. In one of Jesus’ last stories before his death, he

reminds us that our lives will be judged on our loving fruitfulness in reaching out to other's needs: 'For I was hungry and you gave me food, a stranger and you welcomed me' (Matthew 25:35-46)."

- Richard C. Brown, *Help Your Child Make Friends and Be a Friend*

Relationship specialist Gary Chapman describes the diverse ways in which people experience love in their relationships: words of affirmation, spending quality time together, receiving gifts, acts of service, and physical touch. He has explored these "love languages" as they apply in relationships with our spouses, children, teens, and friends. The key to caring for our relationships is to communicate in the language that makes the other feel love.

What Chapman says about the marriage relationship can apply to all our family relationships: "Could it be that deep inside hurting couples exists an invisible 'emotional love tank' with its gauge on empty? Could the misbehavior, withdrawal, harsh words, and critical spirit occur because of that empty tank? If we could find a way to fill it, could marriage be reborn? With a full tank could couples be able to create an emotional climate where it is possible to discuss differences and resolve conflicts? Could that tank be the key that makes marriage work?"

- Gary Chapman, *The Love Languages*

From your personal experience, OBSERVE:

1. Identify the relationships you are involved in (family, work, neighborhood, church).
2. What are the qualities of friendship? Answer for yourself, and then ask your children and two or three others.

Possible: speaking affirming words, spending quality time together, being honest, holding each other accountable, forgiving wrongs patiently

3. According to Chapman, the “love languages” are words of affirmation, spending quality time together, receiving gifts, acts of service, and physical touch. In what ways do you see these “languages” speak in your relationships?
4. Identify a marriage enrichment program or relationship skills training that is available in your area. Bring the details for attending to the meeting.
 - [World Wide Marriage Encounter http://www.wwme.org/](http://www.wwme.org/)
 - [Visit For Your Marriage website for details on programs and contact information \(including CFM\): http://www.foryourmarriage.org/encouragement/](http://www.foryourmarriage.org/encouragement/)
 - For all kinds of families: *The Messy Family Project* (blog, podcast, free resources) <https://www.messyfamilyproject.org/>

In light of Christ’s teachings, JUDGE:

1. What is the difference between a friend and an acquaintance?

[A friend is invested in maintaining a relationship with you; friends listen; friends have patience with you.](#)

2. Spouses are friends, aren’t they? How can spouses nurture their marital relationship?

[By practicing being friends; by spending quality time; by paying attention](#)

3. How would you describe your relationship with God? Is God a friend or an acquaintance?

4. What could you do to be a better friend: to God, to your spouse, to your children, to others?

Based on what has been discussed, ACT:

1. Greet and introduce yourself to someone on the way out of church that you see regularly.
2. Visit a neighbor you don’t know and introduce yourself.

3. Spend time with your spouse or a friend, and share a dream you have for the future.
4. Attend one of the marriage enrichment or relationship skills programs that you learned about from the Observes.
5. Make and use the Sharing Plate (see the Activity) to build good communication at home.

Our Action to be carried out and reported at the next meeting

AT HOME, DISCUSS AS A FAMILY

1. What do you need from a friend in order to feel loved?
2. What do you need from your spouse in order to feel loved?

LOOK AHEAD TO THE NEXT MEETING

Take a look at the Observes for the next meeting to see what needs to be done in preparation.

Date _____

Time _____

Place _____

If children have come to the meeting with their parents, gather them to join you in the closing prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, we thank you for all our friends. In good times and in bad times, help us to be good friends to others. When relationships are difficult, grant us the grace to see in the challenges of life some part of your cross. In times of family conflict, help us to listen and forgive. In times of trial, send

your spirit to strengthen us. In times of doubt, bless us with the patience to hear your voice and respond to it. In all times, be with us. For these things we pray.

And now we pray the Prayer for the Christian Family Movement (found on the inside back cover of the book).

FIVE

In the World, but Not of It

Page 33 in Participants' Book

ACTIVITIES – Fruits of the Spirit

The fruits of the Spirit: love (charity), joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, modesty and chastity. Here are two suggestions for activities with children in mind.

Younger kids. Draw out a tree with twelve branches. Make twelve fruits, each labeled with a fruit of the Spirit. Children glue fruits onto the tree and color. Talk about the fruits. Choose two or three fruits – ask children: how can you show [fruit] to your family and friends?

Older kids. Create a matching exercise with the fruits and an example of how to practice that fruit. This can be prepared in advance or the kids can participate in creating it. Discuss more ways to practice the fruits with others (family, friends, classmates, strangers, or those we don't get along with) along with things that hinder us from practicing them.

GATHER

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly father, we gather today, humbly seeking your Spirit, your love and your wisdom in fellowship with our CFM friends. May our simple gathering be an occasion of grace to listen and share and grow closer to Jesus. May we leave this gathering with a deeper understanding of the proper place of “the things of the world” in an ordered Christian life. Teach us what we can do to make this world better for all families. We pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.

REPORT ON ACTIONS

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

“Know this, my dear brothers: everyone should be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, for the wrath of a man does not accomplish the righteousness of God. Therefore, put away all filth and evil excess and humbly welcome the word that has been planted in you and is able to save your souls. Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his own face in a mirror. He sees himself, then goes off and promptly forgets what he looked like. But the one who peers into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres, and is not a hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, such a one shall be blessed in what he does. If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, his religion is vain. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world.”

– James 1: 19-27, New American Bible

1. How can being “quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” accomplish God’s purpose?

Possible responses: It gives people a chance to hear themselves and reflect on what they are doing; people can learn by experience why their choices are wrong; self-control by one can lead the other to reconsider their reactions.

2. What does it mean to keep oneself “unstained by the world”?

Rather than absorbing selfish and unhealthy attitudes, a person of faith retains the peace and kindness of Christ.

SOCIAL INQUIRY

“(T)he laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in

each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity.”
- *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*

“How do we put the love for God in action? By being faithful to our family to the duties that God has entrusted to us. Whatever form we are, able or disabled, rich or poor, it is not how much we do but how much love we put in the doing – a lifelong sharing of love with others.” - Mother Teresa

“When parents teach children to take turns, to share what they have with others, to respect other persons and their property, to understand rules and accept the consequences of breaking them, and to practice hospitality, they are preparing their children for good citizenship as well as building up society itself....Faith filled families bring to the larger society their experience of placing the common good above individual wants, and of valuing persons over things. When families lose sight of these values, society surely does too.”
- Mary Jo Pederson, et al, *More Than Meets the Eye: Finding God in the Folds and Creases of Family Life*

From your own experience, OBSERVE

1. What subtle things tend to lead Christian people to be conformed to this present age in negative ways?
Possible: wanting to fit in, desiring the approval of the popular or powerful, addiction, unhealthy relationships, ignorance of Christian teachings, some movies and music
2. The fruits of the Spirit are love (charity), joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, modesty and chastity. What are

examples of people who nourish the world with these spiritual fruits?

Ask the group to tell about someone they have met or someone who has been in the news lately.

3. How does the virtual world (games, apps, social media, etc.) lead us to embrace non-Christian values?

Ask the group to give examples of violent, prejudiced, sexist, or materialistic entertainment that they have observed.

4. Share ways that you have used the virtual world to renew your mind in a positive way.

Possible: Enlightening music; educational podcasts and videos; communicating with long-distance grandchildren; seeing beautiful art and nature

In light of Christ's teachings, JUDGE

1. What can you (or your family) do to avoid conforming to negative influences?

Possible: Consuming more positive media; turning off media; disengaging with negative people

2. How can a family participate in influencing institutions, both civic and religious, to improve society?

Possible: voting for change, staying informed about local policies and politics, inviting a speaker to explain a new program, researching online, peaceful demonstrations, writing or visiting representatives

3. What may be hindering you or your family from being a source of good example in the world?

Responses may be rather personal. Do not insist that everyone share. Invite people to identify hinderance silently, and only share if they feel comfortable.

Based on what has been discussed, ACT

1. Choose one of the hindrances or things that lead to conformity to the world from the above section. Give it up for one month.
2. Limit your home use of electronic devices to a specific one-hour period each day for one or more weeks. Invest any saved time in renewing your mind and in family relationships.
3. Has God been quietly prompting you toward a particular way of being leaven in your neighborhood or community? Take action on that prompting.

Our Action to be carried out and reported at the next meeting

AT HOME, DISCUSS AS A FAMILY

1. Read the Scripture passages or the quote by Mother Teresa out loud three times. What is one thing you remember about what you heard? Write it down or tell your family about it.
2. Read Romans 12:2. What does it mean to be conformed to the world? What things cause you to be conformed to the world?
3. What can you do to transform yourself and others (your family and friends) to be more like Jesus?
4. What is something you did today that would make Jesus happy? Why do you think so?"

LOOK AHEAD TO THE NEXT MEETING

Take a look at the Observes for the next meeting to see what needs to be done in preparation.

Date _____

Time _____

Place _____

If children have come to the meeting with their parents, gather them to join you in the closing prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly father, we ask for the intercession of the saints who confronted “the things of the world” with their hearts set on Jesus. We ask for the grace of the Holy Spirit to live a Christ-centered holy life - in the world with our families - with each family member (through prayer, example and encouragement) lovingly pushing and pulling the others toward Jesus. Help us to make a difference in our community, leading all people to you. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful. Kindle in them the fire of your love.

And let us pray the Prayer for the Christian Family Movement (found on the inside back cover of the participants' book).

SIX

Be My Witnesses

Page 39 in Participants' Book

ACTIVITY -- Bible Play

Plan a Bible-based play (or one based on the life of a saint) and perform it for kids in your neighborhood, at a local nursing home or for a neighbor who doesn't get out. A simple way to do this is to choose a children's book and have the narrator read the whole story with kids just acting it out.

GATHER

OPENING PRAYER

Glorious God, strengthen us, your children,
with the riches of your glory.
Deepen our faith in your Son, Jesus, who dwells within us.
Open our hearts and minds
to comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth
of the love of Christ.
Fill us with the fullness of your Life,
so that by your power at work within us,
You are able to accomplish far more than all we ask or
imagine.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
Amen.
- Based on Ephesians 3:14-21

REPORT ON ACTIONS

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

“And how can people preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring [the]

good news!’ But not everyone has heeded the good news; for Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed what was heard from us.’ Thus faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.”

- Romans 10:15-17, New American Bible

- Considering that faith comes from what is heard, what are some of the ways that Christians share their faith?

Possible: on social media, on the phone, in casual conversation with acquaintances, when visiting in the hospital, when waiting in line to vote

“Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone! Therefore, you shall love the Lord, your God, with your whole heart, and with all your soul, and with your whole strength. Take to heart these words which I enjoin on you today. Drill them into your children. Speak of them at home and abroad, whether you are busy or at rest. Bind them at your wrist as a sign and let them be as a pendant on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates.”

- Deuteronomy 6:4-9, New American Bible

“For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.”

- 1 Corinthians 15:3-5, New American Bible

- What things are we told to do or recall and pass on? Who will hear and see us?

The core truths of our faith (called the *Kerygma*, in Greek): God alone is God, we are God's people, and, in accordance with the scriptures, Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again. The Apostles are witnesses to these events. The "Apostles Creed" contains the *kerygma*.

SOCIAL INQUIRY

In his homily, Pope Francis praised the evangelizing witness of the women who at dawn, go to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body and find the first sign of the resurrection: the empty tomb. "The women are compelled by love and know how to welcome this announcement with faith. They believe and immediately they share... They can't contain the joy of knowing that Jesus is alive, the hope that fills their hearts! This should also happen in our lives. We should feel the joy of being Christians! We believe in the Risen One who has conquered evil and death! We must have the courage to 'go out' to bring this joy and this light to all the areas of our lives. Christ's Resurrection is our greatest certainty. It is our most precious treasure! ... It is not just for us: it is to be proclaimed... This is precisely our witness.... Take this certainty to all, the Lord is alive and walks beside us in our lives. This is your mission. Take this hope forward with you. Be anchored to this hope, this anchor that is heaven. Hold tight to the lifeline. Be anchored and carry this hope forward. You, witnesses of Jesus, carry forward the testimony that Jesus is alive and that this will give us hope; it will bring hope to this world that has grown a bit old because of wars, evil, and sin."

From your own experience, OBSERVE:

1. Do you find it easy to see God at work in the day to day events of life? If so, do you feel comfortable talking about his interaction in your life with others? Who are those you feel comfortable sharing with?

[Ask members to tell a story of God at work in their daily life.](#)

2. Pick one day and conscientiously observe how God might be at work in the events of that day. Be prepared to share it at the meeting.
3. Identify one resource that has helped deepen your faith. Bring the title or a copy to the meeting. You might ask your parish faith formation leader to suggest a title.

[Print and or online resources may be mentioned.](#)

- *Opening the Bible*, book by Bro. Thomas Merton (Liturgical Press, 1970)

- *3-Minute Retreats: Daily Online Prayer*, by Liturgical Press, <https://www.loyolapress.com/3-minute-retreats-daily-online-prayer>

4. What are the barriers that keep you from talking with others about your faith with confidence?

In light of Christ's teachings, JUDGE:

1. Is God a topic in public conversation? If not, why? If so, is the perception and presentation of God positive or negative?
2. When is it necessary to use words to share your faith?
3. What personal qualities, preparation, and resources does one need to speak confidently to others about their faith?
4. Are you confident that you could answer questions about your faith with a non-believer or help teach it to others?

From what has been discussed, ACT:

1. Think of ways to share your faith with others. For example, offer to teach religious education at your church, or put on one of the Bible plays described in the Activity for this chapter.

Resource: "Your Story is God's Story: Creating Your Testimony," a step-by-step worksheet by Cru Evangelization Ministry (Campus Crusade for Christ International) <https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/share-the-gospel/evangelism-principles/how-to-tell-your-story-worksheet.html>

2. Invite a neighbor or coworker to a parish event or liturgy.

3. Read the Bible or Catechism (or the faith formation resource you learned about in this meeting) each day to grow in your own faith and confidence.
4. Pray the Holy Spirit prayer (see closing prayer) each day asking God to make you his witness.
5. As a group, sponsor an opportunity for others to learn more about Scripture, Church doctrine, or Christian tradition.

Our Action to be carried out and reported at the next meeting

AT HOME, DISCUSS AS A FAMILY

1. How can you tell that Jesus is alive today?
2. Where did you see God at work in your day today?
3. If someone asked you why you go to church, what would you say?

LOOK AHEAD TO THE NEXT MEETING

Take a look at the Observes for the next meeting to see what needs to be done in preparation.

Point out this special instruction:

NOTE: Bring a non-perishable food item or usable clothing to donate at the next meeting.

Date _____

Time _____

Place _____

If children have come to the meeting with their parents, gather them to join you in the closing prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth.

O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations. We ask this through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

And let us pray the Prayer for the Christian Family Movement (found on the back inside cover).

SEVEN

Serving as Jesus Did

Page 45 in Participants' Book

ACTIVITY –Friendship Cards for the Needy
Provide art supplies for people to make colorful friendship notes to send along with food or clothing donations for the needy (one of the Action options).

GATHER

OPENING PRAYER

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. Amen.

REPORT ON ACTIONS

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

There was a scholar of the law who stood up to test him and said, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus said to him, “What is written in the law? How do you read it?” He said in reply, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” He replied to him, “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.” But because he wished to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

Jesus replied, “A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going

down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side.

Likewise, a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him.

The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, ‘Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.’ Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers’ victim?” He answered, “The one who treated him with mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”
- Luke 10: 25-37, New American Bible

1. Why do Christians place an emphasis on the importance of service?

We are called "Christians" for a reason: Jesus, by his words and actions, teaches us to follow his way.

2. Why is it not enough just to have faith and go to church? If we look at Jesus, we see that he was an observant Jew who worshipped in the temple, but that he spent most of his time among the people, teaching and healing.

3. What gets in the way of our being the “Good Samaritan?” Possible: fear of strangers, fear of being criticized, ignorance, prejudice, mismanaged time, lack of partners to join us in service

SOCIAL INQUIRY

“We give the name Church to the people whom the Lord gathers, who strive to follow his way of love, and through whose lives his saving presence is made known. A family is

our first community and most basic way in which the Lord gathers us, forms us and acts in the world. The early church expressed this truth by calling the Christian family a domestic church or church of the home. ...The point of the teaching is simple, yet profound. As Christian families, you not only belong to the church, but your daily life is a true expression of the church. Your domestic church is not complete by itself, of course. It should be united with and supported by parishes and other communities within the larger church. Christ has called you and joined you to himself in and through the sacraments. Therefore, you share in one and the same mission that he gives to the whole church.... You carry out the mission of the church of the home in ordinary ways when: You believe in God and that God cares about you. It is God to whom you turn in times of trouble. It is God to whom you give thanks when all goes well.”

- *Follow the Way of Love*

Pope Francis during Holy Week in 2013, said: “Living Holy Week following Jesus means learning how to come out of ourselves to reach out to others, to go to the outskirts of existence, to be the first to move towards our brother and sisters, especially those who are most distant, those who are forgotten, those who are most in need of understanding, consolation and help. There is so much need to bring the living presence of Jesus, merciful and full of love.... Help one another. This is what Jesus teaches us. This is what I do, and I do it with my heart.”

In his book, *Mother Teresa: Angel of God*, Fr. Eugene Palumbo writes, “Mother Teresa did just what Jesus did and taught us to do; she put the unconditional love of God and the unequivocal love of neighbor together.”

While Mother Teresa provides an excellent example of “serving as Jesus did,” we are each called to serve in different ways. We do not have to follow in the exact footsteps of St. Teresa. We need to be open to the Spirit in our lives and use our gifts to the service of others.

From your own experience, OBSERVE:

1. Identify and tell about a modern-day person whose life exemplifies concern for the dignity of each person.

Possible examples: Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche homes for people with disabilities; Sr. Helen Prejean, advocate for prisoners on death row

2. As a family, look through the Bible and find some examples or stories of service to others. Bring to the meeting to share.

Examples: Friends help the paralyzed man meet Jesus (Luke 5: 17-26); Woman washes Jesus feet with her tears (Luke 7: 36-50); Abraham welcomes the three strangers (Genesis 18); Esther pleads for her people's safety (Esther 5)

3. As a family, look through the newspaper or on the Internet to find some examples or stories of service provided by people today.
4. Refer back to the list you made in Chapter 2, "Using Time Faithfully," Is service to others a part of this list?

In light of Christ's teachings, JUDGE:

1. What keeps us from seeing Jesus in all people, thus limiting our ability to help our children see Jesus in others?

Prejudices we absorbed in our youth or from society can blind us to the equal dignity of all people. We may be startled when a person has a distressing appearance because of illness or homelessness.

2. What can families do to help their children care about others?

Educating ourselves about the needs of people who appear different or strange to us; reading about the problem; getting to know someone from a different culture or group; working together on a project to help others in society.

3. How do we grow closer as a family while giving service to others in our community?

Before going to the project, gather as a family to pray for those you will meet; ask family members to share their concerns or questions about the upcoming experience; share your own feelings about it.

4. What do we gain as an individual when we serve others?
As a family?

Our lives are enriched by knowing new people and understanding the challenges they are facing; we become more mature Christians when we extend ourselves to others; we discover gifts and talents that we had not previously known we had; we learn new ways of being a friend.

Based on what has been discussed, ACT:

1. Recognize three strengths of each family member. Share these with each other. Discuss how these strengths may be used in serving others.
2. As a family, find a way to improve one of the areas of need you identified in the Observe section of this chapter. Afterwards, be sure to discuss the experience with each other.
3. Collect food and clothing donations (see the Activity) and deliver them to your local pantry.
4. Investigate www.stophungernow.org to see how your group or family can volunteer to make meal packages that are shipped around the world to support school feeding programs and crisis relief.

AT HOME, DISCUSS AS A FAMILY

1. Name a service Jesus did for another. What could I do that would be similar? Who do we know that needs help? What could we do for them?

Jesus washed his disciples' feet; he fed 5,000 people; he cured the sick; he raised the widow's son and Lazarus from death.

2. When did you receive help from someone? How did it make you feel?

CLOSING PRAYER

Sing a familiar hymn about Christian service. The hosts could borrow hymnals from church for the closing song.

And let us pray the Prayer for the Christian Family Movement (found on the inside back cover of the participants' book)

EIGHT

Following Christ Together

(Another way of saying “Christian Family Movement”)

Page 60 in Participants' Book

ACTIVITY -- CFM in a Word

Think of one word that expresses the benefit of CFM for your family. Draw the word on a 5 x 7 index card, and then decorate the word colorfully in the style of the old illuminated documents. Collect all the word cards and use them in a poster displayed in the parish center to attract more people to join CFM.

GATHER

OPENING PRAYER

All ages can participate. For this meeting set a prayerful mood by placing a lit candle on a center table. Have pens, small pieces of paper and a basket 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, colorful leaves in the fall).

Leader: Let us reflect on how God’s enduring love and mercy is evident in our lives. 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. During this quiet reflection time, appropriate music can be played.)

Let us pray the Prayer for the Christian Family Movement, found in the back of the program book.

REPORT ON ACTIONS

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

“Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else, believe because of the works themselves. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father. And whatever you ask in my name, I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it. If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me, because I live and you will live.”

– John 13:11-19 New American Bible

- What does it mean to you to be a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth?
- Who are your companions in following Jesus?

After meeting together over several months, the group members will recognize each other as companions on their faith journey.

Mention this if it does not come up.

SOCIAL INQUIRY

“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 faith, providing counter cultural messages about poverty, consumerism, sexuality, and racial justice — to name a few.... 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.”

- U.S. Catholic Bishops, *Follow the Way of Love*

“Your mission will be closely tied to your gifts. At baptism and confirmation, we are reminded that God created every person with gifts. Even gifts such as a sense of hospitality or humor are given for the good of the community. In marriage, we have the opportunity to nurture each other. One may be good at organization; the other at healing presence. All gifts are needed in the Body of Christ, of which we are a part.”

- Mary Jo Pederson, *For Better, for Worse, for God*

“Life offers us many options. For those who choose Christian family life with a generous spirit, their families become an earthly, sacred expression of God’s life lived on earth as it is in heaven. Celebrating life with strong love—that’s the essence of God’s plan as lived and taught by Jesus Christ.”

- David M. Thomas, *A Community of Love*

From your personal experience, OBSERVE:

Observe 1 and 2 can be done before the meeting or at this time.

1. Make a list of the personal hopes you have for your family (spiritual, social, etc.). Beside each hope, list ways it might be achieved.
2. Report how you have used your time differently since the first meetings of the CFM year.
3. How has participating in CFM improved your family life this year? Name some specific ways.

This is a good opportunity for children to chime in to the discussion if they are present. Some possible responses: We made new friends;

we are more intentional about family prayer; we have cut some items from our busy schedule.

In light of Christ's teachings, JUDGE:

1. How has participation in this CFM group helped you address the goals you have listed above?
2. How have your priorities been affected?
3. What from the experience brings you hope for your family?
4. What is needed to help you continue to grow in your own faith and to pass that on to your children?

Based on what has been discussed, ACT:

For new groups:

1. Make a commitment now to continue your membership in the Christian Family Movement. Fill out a membership form (available from director@cfm.org or at www.cfm.org) and attach your donation to CFM or pay online. Learn more about membership in the closing pages of this book.

For every CFM group:

2. From the list of CFM program titles available at www.cfm.org, choose two or three that look interesting. Order copies from the national office.
3. Set a date to meet again to choose the next program book for the group. Who will serve as the lead couple or contact person for your group in the coming year, helping to organize communication between members and with the national office?
4. To build community, plan a group social event with your families, such as a potluck dinner or picnic. Invite any other families who might like to join CFM.

5. Plan a gathering to introduce CFM to others. Create a CFM poster using photos and the “CFM Words” decorations, described in the Activity in this chapter.

For some intergenerational gathering plans, visit [the Supplemental Materials](#) page on the CFM Website

https://www.cfm.org/supplemental_materials:

- [Gifts of the Holy Spirit - 8 Activities](#)
- [Family and Community Meetings - 3 Events](#)
 - *Working Together*
 - *Hunger Banquet*
 - *Caring for Creation Picnic*

CLOSING PRAYER

If you did the CFM Word Card activity, share with the group.

In a spirit of prayer and reflection, each person name aloud one blessing of the CFM experience. After each intention, all respond: “Thanks be to God.” When all have shared their intentions, 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. Amen.

AT HOME, DISCUSS AS A FAMILY

1. What was your favorite experience with your CFM group this year? What did you like?
2. If someone asks you about CFM and you only have two minutes to talk, what would you say?

BLESSING PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY TABLE

Light a candle on the table.

Light is a sign of God's presence among us. The Lord is our light and our salvation. We are called to be the children of light, to be a light unto all nations.

ALL - Blessed are You, Lord our God, who has made us lights to one another.

Thank you, Lord, for the family table. Here we share food, friendship, love, sorrow, work and pleasure. May this table be a holy gathering place for our family, friends and relatives. May we welcome the stranger here with food and fellowship. May words of love, encouragement, compassion and tenderness be the language spoken here. Let not angry thoughts and words be at this tables. May forgiveness and peace take place here.

May the many and varied activities that take place at this table have a holy purpose. May our work, our study, our nourishment, our fellowship reflect Christ. May there always be room for more at this table. As more people at our table bring us closer together physically may this also happen by bringing us closer together in our hearts.

As we are gathered together at our table, may Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, be ever present, turning our hearts to one another and deepening the bonds of friendship with all those who are gathered here.

ALL - May we praise You, Lord, with this symbol of joy, our family meal. Thank you, God, for the blessings of this past week: for life and for love, for our health and for friendship and for the rewards that have come to us from our many labors. May all who gather at this table, know the presence and love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

CFM Group Agreement

The CFM group members gather to support each other. In order for this to happen, this must be a safe and comfortable place, and responsibility for the group must be shared. The following guidelines help foster this kind of spirit among us. Review these points with the group.

1. Confidentiality is essential. Anything said here will remain here.
2. A good listener never interrupts the person who is speaking. Listen with an open mind. Realize and respect that each person sees life from a unique perspective.
3. A good listener does not try to “fix” the situation.
4. Everyone is encouraged to participate to the extent that they wish. Be aware of our limited time frame, however, and allow time for all to share. If a person has a “heavy heart” and needs extra time, we will let the Spirit guide us.
5. Respect each one’s journey of faith. Growth is different for each person. Change and transformation come in many ways!
6. Respect everyone in the group by letting the host know when you will be unable to attend. Attendance at meetings is important in building trust and community.
7. Many groups have a coordinating couple or team of couples that take responsibility for organizing the group for the year. Support these couples! Make communication with your family easy and help out where you can with social activities, outreach, and promotion of CFM. Consider taking on the role of coordinating couple for a year or two. Many groups find that rotating responsibilities meets the needs of all families.

Why Membership Matters

Benefits of Membership

One way that CFM accomplishes its mission is by providing meeting guides (program books) to its members for use in their small faith-sharing groups. These guides are provided as a benefit of membership. Other benefits include the ACT e-newsletter, CFM Scripture Reflections, marriage and parenting pointers, and access to digital versions of CFM programs. As members meet in their small groups, they Observe, Judge and Act to make their world a better place.

Your donation -- suggested \$10 per family for new members, renewing members \$40 per family -- supports our mission. When you donate, you are saying that the values represented by CFM are important to you. Most of the work of the Movement is done by individual members who absorb their own expenses.

CFM is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation. Donations to the Christian Family Movement are tax-deductible.

Donations from members cover the administrative costs of a small national office, outreach to new families, and advertising to make our mission and programs known to new members, pastors, and family life ministers. Your donations support new families who try CFM for the first time.

If the suggested donation amount presents a hardship for anyone, please encourage them to contribute whatever they can. No one will be excluded from CFM for economic reasons.

Memberships should be renewed annually. Even if your group has not completed the current inquiry book, renewal is important to ensure that members continue to receive the full benefits of membership. Join or renew membership and

donation online at the Join/Renew page:

<http://www.cfm.org/join-and-renew-form>. If members prefer paper forms, one can be downloaded from that webpage. Feel free to make copies for the group. We send the requested books after we receive your membership forms.

CFM is a movement and we want to keep our members connected. It is important that group leaders send a list of their members contact info so we can keep in touch with all active members regardless of donation level. If you have your own database, you may send us a printout or an electronic file. Please collect at least the mailing and email addresses of each member.

Except for library or expansion purposes, **program books may not be purchased without membership.** Review copies for parish leaders are \$10.00 each and can be returned, unused, for credit. Replacement books, or extra books for couples who want two books, are \$10.00.

Please allow 10 working days for your order to reach you. Regular shipping for larger orders is \$5. Expedited shipping can be arranged at your expense.

CFM National Office:
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