Coming of Age

A CFM Program

Christian Family Movement
“Be doers of the word, and not hearers only.”

James 1:22

“The Church speaks clearly of the duties of the family members to one another that build a radiant faith…. But the Church doesn’t stop there; it also speaks of the relationship between families and the larger culture, the duty of service, working for the common good, welcoming strangers, and giving voice to the Christian conscience. That is the message; you are the messenger.”

Bishop Anthony Pilla,
Address to the Christian Family Movement
Oberlin College, August 5, 1995

THE MISSION OF CFM IS:

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

A CFM Program

Christian Family Movement
Coming of Age

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Introduction

In 1992 CFM published Second Wind, a book for couples who were newly experiencing the empty nest. Written by Sue Hamilton of Ann Arbor, Mich., the book has been a boon to couples who are experiencing a host of changes in their lives and are looking for a positive approach to the issues of aging. The CFMers who used Second Wind soon wanted more material about the issues that were unique to their stage of life. Under the guidance of editor Margie Murchan, San Jose, Calif., five more meetings were composed. The result is the book you are holding, Coming of Age.

These five meetings deal with the issues of relationship that challenge us in the second half of life: our identity as we move beyond parenting, our relationship with each other as couples, with our parents as they age, with our children's children, and with all the issues that come as we transition out of the workforce.

These meetings have been written by CFMers who have faced these challenges and found their way through to answer the Christian call of service and love for others in a new stage of life. We offer these meetings to you as a help to you while you are finding your own answers and Coming of Age.
Acknowledgements

Thanks go to all who helped in the production of this book

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Thanks to the Action Groups across the USA wrote, tested and critiqued the meetings.

The Scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version: Catholic Edition, copyright 1993 and 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches in the USA. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

*Are We Having Fun Yet?: Working together to create a loving marriage* by Phil Klever. International Marriage Encounter, 1988.


*Prayers for Married Couples* by Renee Bartkowski. Liguori, 1989


“Trading in the Good Time,” *Three Minutes a Day* used by permission of The Christophers, 12 East 48th St., New York, NY 10017.

OUTLINE OF A CFM MEETING

CFM groups meet in homes. The group members take turns hosting the meeting. If this is impossible for reason of the size of members’ homes or geographical distances involved, groups sometimes meet in a Church based location.

Gather

This part of the meeting is a chance to reconnect and build community.

OPENING PRAYER

The meeting should begin with a prayer. Each program chapter begins with a prayer suggestion. Spontaneous prayer is also often used. Leaders may wish to add music or make use of other prayer resources. For prayer resources, visit www.cfm.org.

Report on actions

By reflecting on its actions, the group will achieve a deeper understanding of the problem and all its implications. Further action may be called for.

Scripture Reflection

The meeting proceeds to a reading from the Bible. Questions are suggested for exploring the meaning of the Word in daily life.

SOCIAL INQUIRY

The social inquiry is a term for the Observe-Judge-Act process, basic to CFM’s approach to Christian living.

Observe

First, get the facts. Sometimes opinions are facts, but at this stage of the meeting members should refrain from expressing their opinions. Try to filter your own points of view and simply report,
like any good objective news reporter. Bring facts and information from current media and local organizations into the Observe section.

Judge
Observe answers the question, "What is the situation?" The Judge part of the Social Inquiry answers the question, "How can we make it a Christian experience and reality?" Recognize what steps you and your group can take to effect Christian change in the situations you have observed and reported on.

Act
The best kind of action is one that grows from the group's observations and their decisions to change or develop a situation. Suggestions in this book are ideas, not directives. Formation-through-action is the essence of CFM. The founders of the movement believed that persons are shaped by their experiences. Share your successful action experiences with CFM in ACT Newsletter, act-editor@cfm.org

Look Ahead to the Next Meeting
Confirm the date and location of the next meeting. What advance work should be done? What particular Observe tasks should be assigned? Be sure to contact your host if you are unable to attend or need directions.

CLOSING PRAYER
A prayer is suggested or the group can intercede for special intentions.

SOCIAL TIME
A short social time with simple refreshments such as rolls and coffee helps members know and understand one another better and builds the group's community
Gather

OPENING PRAYER

Breath of Life, you give us the power to love. In every age, you have proved your faithfulness and care for us. Your kindness and mercy teach us to treat one another with patience and compassion. Our faith convinces us to hope that love will conquer death and good will overcome every evil. Enliven that faith in our hearts today and always as we reflect on this new phase of our lives. May God bless us all with care for one another, hope beyond hope, and faith that moves mountains. Amen

Scriptural Reflection

(M)ake my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.

Philippians 2: 2-4

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

1 Corinthians 13: 4-7
• When is love tested or strained?
• What qualities are most precious in a lover?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

Since we researched and wrote our book *The Second Half of Marriage* (1996), we conducted an additional survey and found once again that the issues in marriage remain basically the same over the years. Issues and problems in marriage cause you neither success or failure; it is how you deal with them that makes a difference, especially in the empty nest…The top three issues of the empty nest—conflict, communication, and sex—are also among the major problem areas for younger couples. We observed no overall gender differences that were very strong. However, females tended to say communication was more of a problem than did males, and males tended to say that sex was more of a problem than females reported. (Are you surprised?)

At this stage of life, money issues are not rated as high as for younger couples, but health issues are rated higher. The fact that fun and recreation are rated so high (#5 of 10) indicates that perhaps couples are having trouble figuring out what to do together that’s enjoyable for both or finding fun things that both will take time out for. For years the shared recreational activities may have centered on the children, and now they do not know how to have fun together.

Claudia and David Arp, et al.
*Fighting for Your Empty Nest Marriage*
Jossey-Bass, 2000

In the middle years, the committed couple conquers the temptation to settle on a plateau marked by monotonous routine and unchallenged by higher goals and father horizons. Instead they use their imaginations in creative ways to keep the romance alive and to form deeper intimacy and stronger spiritual bonds.

--William Roberts, “Commitment to the Ongoing Process of Marriage”
*Family Perspectives Journal*, National Association of Family Life Ministers
Winter 2001-2002
What people seem to want most of all in a mate is a best friend for life. But for too many couples, this desire for lifelong intimacy is more a hope than a reality. It’s not that it is an unreasonable expectation to have your mate by your best friend, most couples start with a good taste of it. It’s just that friendships need to be nurtured in ways that couples fail to realize until their friendship is all but gone.

Scott Stanley, Daniel Trathen, Savanna McCain, Milt Bryan
_A Lasting Promise: A Christian Guide to Fighting for Your Marriage_

Couples often look back to their original commitment and smile at their naïve start. They think of where they’ve come from and appreciate strengths that pulled them through hard times and helped them enjoy the good times. After looking back, it’s good to look forward, set goals for the marriage and recommit to a future together. Unfortunately, some couples come to this point in life and secretly wonder why there are still married or what they have in common now that the children are gone. Unless they talk about this openly and recommit to the marriage, their relationships may be estranged with an over-involvement in outside people and activities and avoidance of each other.

Phil Klever
_Are We Having Fun Yet?: Working together to create a loving marriage_
International Marriage Encounter, 1988

**Observe**

1. What are the major transitions you are presently facing?
2. What qualities do you most value in a friend?
3. What do you do just for fun?
4. Each person should draw a floor plan of the first home you shared with your spouse. Describe your drawing to the group, sharing some of your early hopes and dreams.
5. Ask two other middle years couples to name the challenges they face when their nest emptied (perhaps the nest is not empty!)

Judge

1. Rate the following issues, with number one being the most severe problem, which you think you are taking into the second half of your marriage:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retirement Planning</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Money</td>
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<td>Fun</td>
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<td>Recreation</td>
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<td>Aging Parents</td>
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<td>Conflict</td>
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<td>Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
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2. What are the best aspects of your marriage?
3. How have your expectations of married life changed since you were a newly wed?
4. What do you want your marriage to look like when you are in your eighties?
5. How has your spouse been a friend to you over the years? Relate specific situations.
6. What negative habits or patterns do couples form, which need to change if marriage is to grow?

Act

1. Write a love letter to your spouse, telling the good qualities you see in him or her.
2. Plan a weekend away together to reconnect or attend a Marriage Encounter weekend.

3. Interview your partner about his or her life story, in the spirit of listening as a friend.

4. Commit to spending 10 minutes a day listening and talking together. See the 10-10 Technique for Active Listening below.

5. Explore one of the resources at the end of this chapter as a couple; or, as a group, sponsor a marriage enrichment program like REFOCCUS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Technique for Active Listening</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. One person talks for 10 minutes about a topic of their choosing: i. e., an issue, an idea, wants and needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The other person listens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The listener repeats (rephrases) issues...ideas...feelings. Checks for accuracy Comments on non-verbal signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Reverse the process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Look Ahead to Next Meeting

Where will you meet? What meeting will you take? What research is needed for good, informed discussion?
CLOSING PRAYER:

Suggested setting. Have each couple light and hold a candle as they recommit to their marriage. Wedding anniversary decorations and refreshments would be appropriate.

Renewing our Vows.

Lord God, we acknowledge your greatness and our continued need for your grace in our marriage. We thank you now for the gift you have given us in each other, this opportunity to love and be loved completely. We accept this beautiful challenge and ask you to bless us.

May our love encourage us to grow to be holier individuals, bringing out the best in each other. Following your example, Jesus, may we be quick to forgive, ready with a healing word or touch.

Teach us to speak to each other with charity and honesty. Help us avoid the temptation to take each other for granted.

Instead, remind us, day by day, to see each other as you see us. May we be as patient with each other as you are with us. May our love be generous, reaching out beyond ourselves to all we meet. We pray that they may meet you in us.

Let our life together be a light of hope to those who fear that a total commitment is not possible today. Faith gives us courage, for we believe that the love that comes from you is freeing and life-giving.

Lord, be a partner with us in our marriage; with your help it will be strong and enduring.

We rejoice that you have brought us together. May we always be one in you. Amen.
Resources for Couples

**PREP Resources for a Loving Relationship**  Marriage enhancement workshops for couples, links to marriage sites, instructor training. [www.prepinc.com](http://www.prepinc.com)

**The National Marriage Project**  Source for latest statistics and discussion on marriage and divorce, from a Catholic perspective. [http://marriage.rutgers.edu](http://marriage.rutgers.edu)

**Rooted in Love**  Resources for stronger marriages. Dr. James Healy, Director of Center for Family Ministry, Catholic Diocese of Joliet, IL. Excellent Audio CD, “When the Cake is Gone: How to Get Married and Stay Engaged.” Highlighting the various stages of Christian Marriage. [www.rootedinlove.com](http://www.rootedinlove.com)

**Marriage Savers**  Community organization working to strengthen marriage. [www.marriagesavers.com](http://www.marriagesavers.com)

**Smart Marriages**  Education about marriage, links, marriage quiz. [www.smartmarriages.com](http://www.smartmarriages.com)

**Marriage Encounter**  Links for local registrations. [www.wwme.org](http://www.wwme.org)

**Stepfamily Association of America**  Offers a variety of educational resources for blended families. 800-735-0329 [www.stepfam.org](http://www.stepfam.org)

**REFOCCUS**  Five-part, self diagnostic tool that can help a couple determine where they are right now. Can be used by a married couple or a group of couples to take a look at their relationships again. Contact the Family Life Office, Catholic Archdiocese of Omaha, 402-551-9003.

**Fighting for Your Empty Nest Marriage: Reinventing your relationship when the kids leave home.**  By Claudia and David

*Insuring Marriage – 25 Proven Ways to Prevent Divorce*

Honor Your Father and Mother: *Caring for Aging Parents*

Gather

**OPENING PRAYER**

Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta once said, “If we do not see God in each other, it is very difficult to love. And as love begins at home, we must have that love for each other at home.” May she, who tenderly cared of those who were often difficult to love, inspire us to care for our aging parents with the love and dignity they deserve.

Fill our hearts with your love, O God, so that we may be able to share your love with others. Purify our hearts, so that we may remember the sacrifices and love our parents had for us over the years. Help us to see them as you see them, and honor them in their later years. Give us new insight into their hopes and concerns, so that we may continue to learn from them.

St. Joseph, pray for us.
St. Joachim and Ann, pray for us.
St. Zachary and Elizabeth, pray for us.
All you holy parents, pray for us.
Amen.

**Report on Actions**
Scriptural Reflection

Those who honor their father atone for sins, and those who respect their mother are like those who lay up treasure. Those who honor their father will have joy in their own children, and when they pray they will be heard. Those who respect their father will have long life, and those who honor their mother obey the Lord; they will serve their parents as their masters. …. My child, help your father in his old age, and do not grieve him as long as he lives; even if his mind fails, be patient with him; because you have all your faculties do not despise him.

Sirach 3: 5- 7, 12-13

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” – this is the first commandment with a promise: “so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.” And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Ephesians 6:1-4

• What attitude is required of a Christian toward their parents?
• When parents become infirm does this duty change?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

In 2001, 30 percent of the population of the United States was 60+ years.

U.N. statistics division

Washing and Dressing

Being clean and well dressed makes a big impact on a person’s outlook, young or old. Cleanliness is also vital for good physical health. Therefore, it is necessary to preserve the senior’s ability to complete these activities his or her self or to provide the necessary assistance.

Nutrition
Seniors sometimes lose weight because of poor nutrition…Of course, weight loss can also be a sign of serious health problems; this should be ruled out by a physician.

**Activities**

Quality of life for both caregiver and senior can be greatly enhanced with physical, mental, and spiritual activities. Depression decreases with activities and the immune system works better in an active and happy person.

http://www2.seniorcareweb.com/

Americans…need to start planning for what [an expert] termed “lifelong mobility.” For senior citizens, that means thinking about where they live now and how they’d get around if they couldn’t drive. He also recommends that people take test rides on local public transit and explore whether they could build a network of people willing to drive them places.

“Driving in the United States is more than just getting from Point A to Point B,” he added. For many people, “it’s their identity. It’s their independence.”

Mary-Ellen Phelps Deily
“Steering Clear of Trouble Senior Drivers’ Ed Programs Aim to Make the Road Safer”
*The Washington Post*
January 29, 2002

The 1.5 million elderly and disabled individuals residing in nursing homes are a highly vulnerable population. They often have multiple physical and cognitive impairments that require extensive assistance in the basic activities of daily living, such as dressing, feeding, and bathing. Many require skilled nursing or rehabilitative care. In recent years, increase attention has been focused on the quality of care afforded nursing home residents. Concerns with inadequate care involving malnutrition, dehydration, and other forms of neglect have contributed to mounting scrutiny from state and federal authorities. There is also growing concern that some residents are abused—pushed, slapped, beaten, and otherwise assaulted—by the individuals to whom their care has been entrusted. Accordingly, the ability to both
apprehend those who have abused nursing home residents and prevent further abuse has generated considerable interest.

General Accounting Office
March 2002

The Federal government will pay nearly 39 billion dollars for nursing home care in 1999. The Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) defines standards that nursing homes must meet to participate in the Medicaid and Medicare programs and contracts with states to certify that facilities meet these standards through annual inspections and complaint investigations.

Committee On Aging Hearings
United States Senate, March 1999
http://www.aoa.dhhs.gov/

“You don’t give a damn about yourself, anybody, or anything. Your aches and pains intensify. Any pride you took in your hair or how you looked disappears.” This is how 70-year old Hikmah Gardiner, an African American, describes depression.

A large reason older people become depressed is the loss and grieving they experience, says Gardiner. “They lose their spouses of 60 years, their children die be-fore they do, or their grandchild gets shot in the street. There is a tremendous loss,” says Gardiner.

Houkje Ross
“Recognizing and Treating Depression in Older Adults”
Closing the Gap
Office of Minority Health,
U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services

Politicians are now busy debating benefit cuts, tax increases and other controversial reforms intended to shore up America’s highly popular Social Security system, but research released in the August 1999 Journal of Gerontology draws attention to an aspect of senior finances seldom mentioned on the campaign trail—the fact that nearly half of all Americans still spend a least some portion of their so-called golden years living in poverty.

Gerry Everding,
“Study shows poverty common among aging”
Record, Washington University in St. Louis
September 16, 1999
If the discussion of financial issues is taboo, try to place yourself in the position of your parents. Many older people view money as connected to personal independence and dignity. First, as your parents if they want your help. Listen to their concerns before offering advice. Let them make the decisions if possible, even if you think you know what’s best.

http://www2.seniorcareweb.com/

Even though family members may offer sound advice about your finances, it is usually a good idea to also ask for help from a bank, a lawyer, or a professional in a senior services agency or senior center…

There are usually three reasons for financial elder abuse:

**Need Or Greed** – People who take advantage of elders usually have financial problems or act out of greed.

**Opportunity** – Offenders often have opportunities to obtain an elder’s money or property by pressuring or otherwise influencing them or taking advantage of the trust, discretion or power that has been given to them.

**A Sense Of Entitlement** – Offenders also usually have a false sense of entitlement – or, in other words, they believe that they “deserve” the money as the future heir or because they believe that older people in general don’t really need all their money.

Dane County Fiduciary Abuse Specialist Team and the Area Agency on Aging of Dane County, Oregon 2001

**Observe**

1. Is my parent’s house clean? Is my parent able to take care of personal hygiene?
2. Is my parent healthy physically, mentally and spiritually?
3. Is my parent’s house safe, or is it filled with clutter?
4. Does my parent have adequate food in the house?
5. Are my parent’s bills paid? Are finances in order?
Judge

1. Who decides if a parent is incapacitated?
2. Who decides when it is time to give up driver’s licenses, checkbook, parent or child? Doctor?
3. When is it time to hire caregivers or place a parent in a care center?
4. How can we deal with my parent’s anger or depression over loss of health or independence?
5. Who takes my parent to medical care? Do we speak with their doctors to help them make medical decisions?
6. When do I begin to control and monitor their medical care and finances?
7. How are an elder’s medical, physical, social and spiritual needs met if all children live at a great distance?

Act

1. Search for community resources and government plans and assistance for the elderly.
2. Involve church visitors to enhance their spiritual life.
3. Be vigilant for signs of physical abuse (bruising) and mental abuse by adult children or care-givers.
4. Be respectful of the fears and concerns of the elderly.
5. Visit or phone your elderly relative as often as possible. Provide stimulation and change whenever possible.

Look Ahead to the Next Meeting
Where will you meet? What meeting will you take? What research is needed for good, informed discussion?
CLOSING PRAYER

Prayer of St. Francis

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
THREE

Intimacy

Issues of Love, Sex and Aging

Gather

OPENING PRAYER

Lord God, Creator of the Universe, we thank you for revealing your desire for intimacy with your creation. Lord Jesus Christ, we give you glory for becoming so intimate with us that you became a human being. Holy Spirit, who dwells in our hearts, we ask you to bless this time of discussion with your gifts of wisdom, understanding, and discernment. May this time we spend together be an instrument of grace for everyone in the room. We pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Report on Actions

Scriptural Reflection

But because of cases of sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except perhaps by agreement for a set time, to devote yourselves to prayer, and then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

1 Corinthians 7:2-5
Paul suggests that married couples, in general, should engage in sexual activity whenever one of the partners wishes. To the surprise of researchers, churchgoing Christian couples engage in sexual intercourse more frequently than non-believers and more frequently than unmarried couples.

- How does the sexual expression of love strengthen a marriage?
- What other expressions of love strengthen a marriage.

**SOCIAL INQUIRY**

I have been privileged to celebrate the marriages of several of my former students...I wonder if they truly realize what they are promising. I doubt that they do. When we are young and romantic, we say “for better or worse” and are sincere, but what we mean is, I hope and believe it will all be “better,” but if the “worse” comes I will try to survive it with God’s grace. It never enters our minds that the “worse” is just as necessary to the growth of love as the “better.” Yet, that is true. The hard times are not obstacles to the growth of love, although they will certainly seem to be such when we are young. Rather, they are a necessary part of the experiences by which real love comes to be.

Thomas H. Green,
*When the Well Runs Dry*
Ave Maria Press, 1998

[A young woman whose parents are still married – yet, by today’s reckoning, should have been divorced, wrote:]

“I have talked to many of my friends whose parents are divorced...They all doubt their ability to spot and maintain love, because they see that their parents thought they were in love, and it didn’t ‘work out’ for them.

...Did the fighting, yelling, un-child centered living make me a little neurotic and make it hard for me to become a well-adjusted adult? Yes! But one thing I could always hold on to was that my parents never divorced. I had to work through a lot of bad habits and personality flaws, but I never doubted that I would be able to be committed to someone...”
The argument is often made in cases like this…that all she has learned is how to have bad relationships. Wrong. She doesn’t want the same marriage her parents had in terms of how they behaved towards each other, but she does want the same marriage, in terms of the ultimate commitment they had to family and to vows.

Ideally, they would have used their determination to commitment to improve their behavior, or become more compassionate about each other’s shortcomings. Though that is not the ultimate point of commitment, it is the ultimate opportunity within commitment.

Laura Schlessinger
*The Ten Stupid Things Couples Do To Mess up their Relationships*
Villard, 1994

**Observe**

1. When you were a teenager, what attitudes toward marriage and affection did you observe in your parent’s relationship, and those of couple you knew?

2. In your marriage, at times of challenge from external forces (unemployment, illness, crisis involving the children), what factors helped strengthen your relationship with each other?

3. Consider two or three recent films or television shows that portrayed couples in love. What aspects of intimacy besides sexual intimacy were portrayed?

4. According to the National Marriage Project, young people talk about “sex” and “relationships” rather than “love,” and although they want to marry a “soul mate,” they consider shared religious commitment relatively insignificant. In what ways has shared religious commitment helped you, as a couple, become “soul mates?”

**Judge**

1. How do our society and culture view marriage and intimacy differently from when you were a teenager or first married? In
what ways do these changes make it easier for couples to grow in intimacy? In what ways do they make it more difficult?

2. What factors have contributed, positively or negatively, to your experience of intimacy in marriage?

3. There are several stages in marriage: before children, while children are at home, the “empty nest,” retirement, and perhaps the return of adult children and grandchildren. What challenges to intimacy does the transition from one stage to another provide? What opportunities to grow in intimacy?

4. The Bible considers the relationship between Christ and the Church and between God and his people, to be like a marriage. In what ways can an individual’s relationship with God strengthen a marriage? In what ways can a strong marriage bring a person closer to God?

5. In what ways is intimacy different from sex? Can a couple have a truly intimate relationship that is not sexual?

Act

1. Discuss as a couple how the passage of time has affected your intimacy, and how you can best take advantage of the opportunities of your current situation.

2. Share memories of particularly positive experiences of intimacy. Revisit those memories (e.g., by visiting a place, sharing a meal) and reflect on how the passage of time has increased your appreciation of one another.

3. Seek some private, relaxed time with each of your children. Discuss what you have learned about how God’s plan of intimacy strengthens marriage, and your hopes that they will learn a fuller picture of sexuality than the media portray.

Look Ahead to Next Meeting

Where will you meet? What meeting will you take? What research is needed for good, informed discussion?
CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, God, we thank you for this time we have spent together. We thank you for the love you have given each couple here, and for your promise to be with us “for better or worse.” In your grace we are better, we are richer, we are healthier, and we grow in the ability to be intimate with one another and with you.

Thank you for your many blessings. Amen.

Sing, “I Will Be Here” by Steven C. Chapman, from More to this Life, Sparrow Records, 1989 or another appropriate song.
FOUR

Retirement:
A New Beginning, Or the End of the Road?

Gather

OPENING PRAYER:
(Isaiah 12:2-3, 4bcd, 5-6)

ALL: You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.

Reader: Surely God is my salvation; I
will trust, and will not be afraid,
for the Lord God is my strength and my might;
he has become my salvation.

ALL: You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.

Reader: With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.
And you will say on that day: Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known his deeds among the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted.

ALL: You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.

Reader: Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously;
let this be known in all the earth.
Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

ALL: You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.
Report on Actions

Scriptural Reflection

Gray hair is a crown of glory. It is gain in a righteous life.

Pr 16:31

The righteous flourish like the palm tree, and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God. In old age they still produce fruit; they are always green and full of sap, showing that the Lord is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

Psalm 92:12-15

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.

Ecclesiastes 3:1

• What talents do you bring into retirement that can be shared? How can those talents be shared?
• Are retirement and being carefree synonymous?
• What’s your version of retirement? What’s God’s version of retirement?

SOCIAL INQUIRY:

Retirement: A retiring, or state of being retired; a withdrawing from office, active service, business, career or employment, etc.
Retire: To withdraw from action or danger, to retreat. To withdraw for the sake of privacy, seclusion, protection, or rejuvenation, or second career.

Adapted from Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary
(Additional wording added in italics)

Jim and Jeri Moat could have spent their retirement years on the golf course or at the Texas seashore. Instead, they’re roughing it out on the unpaved, rocky roads of Arteaga, Mexico, bringing health care to its citizens.
Delivering much needed supplies, medicines, and information, the Moats travel throughout the three valleys and two mountain ranges. They meet families living in homes with dirt floors, no running water, and little knowledge of disease prevention. Our main goal is health education they say. How do you define “the good life?” For some, there’s nothing better than following Jesus. The Lord has “sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted” (Isaiah, 61: 1-2).

“Trading in the ‘Good Time”
Three Minutes a Day
Christopher Books

Legacy: What’s your plan for leaving a lasting mark on the earth? Benjamin Carson, Sr., M.D. a product of the Detroit ghetto and now a noted brain surgeon for children at Johns Hopkins said one’s legacy is certainly not measured by wealth: “When I talk about a successful life, I mean a life that benefits the people around you. One can die penniless, as did Mother Teresa, and have an enormous impact on the lives of others.” A financial legacy is like a ring of gold in the big bathtub of life—it’s simply what’s left once you’ve left. Very large legacies even come with brains included called trustees.

“Lasting Impressions: The Legacy You -Leave”

The only way to live well in old age is to live it in God, (Linda Zaglio, age 101). Our country and our world have never had to many older people—healthy, active, gifted older people. If we cannot foresee all the ways in which they will change society and the Church, we can say with certainty that change will happen.

We, the Catholic bishops of the United States, are pleased to celebrate this International Year of Older Persons by inviting older persons, their families, and their faith communities to help us develop new initiatives that encourage the participation of older persons in society and in the Church. We reiterate that aging is a gift to the entire faith community. When that community reflects
the contributions of all—the old as well as the young—it will truly proclaim the ageless Christ present among us.

“Blessings of Age”
A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1999
www.nccbuscc.org/laity/blessings

If you want to live to be 100 or older, you can’t sit around waiting for it to happen.

George Burns
How to Live to Be 100
G.K. Hall & Co., 1985

By 2030, 1 in 5 Americans will be 65 or older – about 65 million of us. Fastest growing population today is our Centenarian persons, 100 years plus.

Secure Retirement Magazine, May/June 1999

Many articles have been written about the ‘empty nest’ syndrome. But what happens if a son or daughter, or even a sister or brother, is unable to care for their child? The legal system can be unfriendly and expensive. “I never got over the sadness that my daughter is addicted to drugs. After awhile I knew I had to let it go. Now I focus on my grand daughter. Caring for her is like nursing a little bird that fell out of a nest and got its wing broken. One of these days, I just know she’s gonna fly. That’s what keeps me going”.

Marianne Takas
Grandparents Raising Grandchildren
Brookdale Foundation Group, 1995

Observe

1. How did your parents succeed in retirement? What would you have wished different for them? What was their idea of retirement? How did they spend their retirement?

2. Are your retirement plans built upon their success or hardships?
3. What’s the optimum time for retirement, optimum age, optimum life status, health and financial status? Do they ever coincide?

4. What political, social, financial, family events could change your retirement plans?

5. What do you know about: senior volunteerism, VISTA and Peace Corp for seniors, social security, Medicare, cost of health insurance, long term care insurance, legal issues of the elderly (sometimes termed Elder Care), living wills and trusts?

6. What opportunities are there in changing lifestyles: letting go of materialism, downsizing; ‘faith growing’ so we can say “God’s going to take care of me”; status changes; life changes; remarriage after a death?

**Judge**

1. **Volunteering**…What talents can you share, what new talents can you learn in preparation for sharing? Is continued education a benefit to me, as well as others, and how? What is ‘life long’ learning?

2. **Relocating**…Why? Why not? Will getting away from the rat race be too lonely? How important is nearness to family? Can paradise in retirement be found in another locale? What are the benefits of rural America vs. city life?

3. **Standard of living**…Will a part time job to enhance pension or help maintain mental health or maintain health insurance for medications, etc. be needed? What types of jobs are there for seniors? What’s the pay and benefits?

4. **Medical requirements**…Health issues that require a nearness or association with a specific doctor or hospital can define your retirement locale. How does this affect your choice of a retirement location?
1. Make a retirement plan, or review your existing retirement plan with your spouse, or update your retirement plans for the next five years.

2. Assist your parent(s) or in-laws in their retirement planning or requirements, i.e. housing, nursing, legal, assisted living.

3. Attend a presentation by an Elder Care lawyer to become familiar with legal aspects of aging.

4. Review your wills, trusts, etc. with a family member, or engage legal help to create a will or trust.

5. Make a list of accomplishments through life, and desires for the future, i.e. pilgrimage to Rome, travel to homeland, anniversary celebrations, family reunions, etc. Make a plan to achieve them.

6. Make a list of volunteer agencies that could use your talents, visit several to see how you could serve.

7. Contact your Area Agency on Aging and investigate programs such as: Foster Grand Parenting, Retired and Senior Volunteers, Senior Advocacy, SHINE (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders), etc.

8. Familiarize yourself with the “Older Americans Act”? How does it affect you or your parents?

**Look Ahead to Next Meeting**

Where will you meet? What meeting will you take? What research is needed for good, informed discussion?
I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise; I bow down towards your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness; for you have exalted your name and your word above everything.
On the day I called, you answered me, you increased my strength of soul.

All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O Lord, for they have heard the words of your mouth. They shall sing of the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord. For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly; but the haughty he perceives from far away.

Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies; you stretch out your hand, and your right hand delivers me. The Lord will fulfil his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O Lord, endures for ever. Do not forsake the work of your hands

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.
Gather

OPENING PRAYER

A Prayer for Grandchildren
(Based on the Letter to the Philippians 1:3-11)

Just as St. Paul loved and shepherded the fledgling church at Philippi, we gaze with love upon grandchildren, and we pray:

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you. Since you were a little baby, I have shared with you my love for the gospel and my hopes for your future as a disciple of Jesus.

I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart. You share in God’s grace with me.

May your love overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best. On the day of Christ, may you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Amen.

Report on Actions
Scriptural Reflection

Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him,
“As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the
ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be
Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the
ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly
fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from
you.
I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your
offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting
covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.”
Genesis 17:3-7

And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds
came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not
have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of
soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no
root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns
grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. Other seed fell into
good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and
yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold." And he said, "Let
anyone with ears to hear listen!"
Mark 4:4-9

- What does God promise to our descendants?
- What, if anything, does God ask in return?
- What is the abundance that grandchildren bring into our life?
- What do grandparents, as parents of their grandchildren’s
  parents, reap “a hundredfold?”

SOCIAL INQUIRY

Grandparents are for unconditional love – meant to express
the extraordinary and wonderful belief that there never were any
children as adorable, brilliant, and beautiful as there own
grandchildren. This may well be what has thus far saved the human
race from total self-destruction. In each millions of crippled souls
there may be just a glimmer of memory – once, long ago, someone thought we were perfect…

(But) steady nurturing and reinforcing feelings of self-worth can be hazardous if grandchildren develop a feeling that we are superhuman beings! Some of the advice and information we give when grandchildren are very young seems to them to have come from a Higher Power; they tend to think we always know what we are talking about. As children get older, more sophisticated, it is not only parents who develop clay feet, but grandparents as well. We need to accept this with good grace as a necessary indication of growing up. It isn’t important that grandchildren perceive us as larger than life. But even when they may eventually disagree with us and become far more interested in their own generation, we hope they will think of us with affection.

Eda LeShan,
_Grand Parenting in a Changing World_
New Market Press, 1993

Substantial increases have occurred in the number of children living in households maintained by grandparents regardless or the presence or absence of the grandchildren’s parents. Between 1970 and 1992, these increases were greatest among children with only one parent in the household. Between 1992 and 1997, the greatest growth has occurred among grandchildren living with grandparents with not parent present. The increase in grandchildren in these “skipped generation” living arrangements has been attributed to the growth in drug use among parents, teen pregnancy, divorce, the rapid rise of single-parent households, mental and physical illness, AIDS, crime, child abuse and neglect, and incarceration of parents.

Ken Bryson and Lynne M. Casper
“Co-resident Grandparents and Grandchildren”
_Current Population Reports_
U.S. Bureau of the Census

We are pals. We are generous. We are teachers, family historians, advisors. We are active. In rapidly increasing numbers, we are wired. Best of all, we are overwhelmingly happy to be what we are–grandparents.
AARP commissioned an independent study to find out how grandparents interact with their grandchildren—what values they seek to impart, how they communicate, what roles they play in the lives of their grandchildren—and the results have just been released... For starters, grandparents are nothing if not generous: seven in ten (in the survey) bought a gift for a grandchild within the past month...

Grandparents, being human, want to pass on their values to their grandchildren. To identify those values, the survey posed an open-ended question: “What do you think is the most important value or legacy you’d like to pass on to a grandchild? Our preferred legacy: morality and integrity (42 percent). Next in line: success and ambition (21 percent), religion (20 percent) being considerate of others (14 percent), and being a trustworthy, responsible person (10 percent). How satisfied are we with our relationships with our grandchildren? Quite. Eight-one percent of the survey participants gave their relationship an eight or higher on a scale of one through ten. The more we see, talk with, write to, and call our grandkids, the more likely we are to know them well. No surprises there...

Glen Waggoner
“The New Grandparents”
Modern Maturity, March-April, 2000

**Observe**

1. Describe your relationship with your grandparents. Bring pictures of them to share.

2. Contact newspapers, television, hospitals, and local government agencies for information, programs, or seminars on how to be a successful grandparent.

3. Discover areas of nurturing and disciplining children where you and your own children differ. How might these differences be negotiated for the benefit of your grandchildren?

4. Talk to a grandparent who is parenting a grandchild on a full-time basis about their hopes, fears, joys and concerns.

5. Ask your children about their memories of their grandparents (your parents).
Judge

1. What should your role be in the life of the grandchildren?
2. How do your own life-experiences affect the way in which you grandparent?
3. What part should grandparents play in their grandchildren’s faith life?
4. Should grandparents enforce the parents’ rules when grandchildren are visiting?
5. How can grandparents create a balance between their own personal lives and their responsibilities as grandparents?
6. In what ways can grandparents keep up with or keep in touch with the lifestyle and environment of their grandchildren, i.e. technology, toys, fashions, music, etc. as they grow older.

Act

1. Make a poster or collage with your grandchildren. Hang it in a prominent place.
2. Create a ritual or ceremony of celebration for becoming a grandparent. Use symbol, word, music, etc.
3. Volunteer with your grandchildren in a community service project of their choice.
4. Tell your favorite memories to your grandchildren.
5. Work with your children and grandchildren to plan a family reunion.
6. If your grandchildren live far away or if you have no grandchildren, “adopt” a “grandchild” who has no grandparents nearby.
7. Do a specific action to enhance your relationship with your grandchildren.
Look Ahead to Next Meeting

Where will you meet? What meeting will you take? What research is needed for good, informed discussion?

CLOSING PRAYER

_Leader:_ Life is your gift to us, O God, and your love for us gives meaning to your gift;
_ALL:_ Show yourself to those who are tempted to despair.
_Leader:_ Jesus, you know our fears and weaknesses.
_ALL:_ Help us to recognize and appreciate the miracles you do for us
_Leader:_ Jesus, sometimes we feel far from shore.
_ALL:_ Come to our aid when we don’t know how to call to you.
_Leader:_ Holy Breath of God, you lead each of us in a direction that is life-giving and fruitful;
_ALL:_ Stir up in us renewed faith and hope.
_Leader:_ For whom and for what else shall we pray?

_Conclude with all reciting this prayer by Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton._

O Father, the first rule of our dear Savior's life was to do your will. Let his will of the present moment be the first rule of our daily life and work, with no other desire but for its most full and complete accomplishment. Help us to follow it faithfully, so that doing what you wish we will be pleasing to you. Amen
What Every CFMer Needs to Know

When families join the Christian Family Movement, they become part of the national lay movement that is CFM-USA. CFM is not a movement unless it has a constituency that subscribes to its philosophy, methodology, and theology. 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. This is our mission. If we accept this mission, we will support it with our time, talent, and money.

Membership entitles a family to receive a program book and a subscription to ACT, the national newsletter, and supports the development of the Christian Family Movement.

The Community of CFM

People group together by accident, choice or design, but community is more than this. Members are open to one another, united in mutual respect (even when they disagree), and are willing to be honest about how they think and feel. As people get to know each other, trust and openness seem to develop around a fellow member in need or for a neighborhood concern. As you work together to answer a need, community forms. Community learns how to laugh at foibles, takes time to relax, play, recreate its humanity, and evaluate its needs and direction.

CFMers look upon one another as good friends and allies. They look to CFM as a source of continuing education, lively support and regular encouragement.

CFM: Promoting Family Life

From its beginnings, CFM has been a grassroots movement with action for justice always at its heart. Today’s groups have
adapted to the times but bear a strong resemblance to those that launched the Movement in the 1940s.

CFM has members in many countries worldwide, all of which cooperate as the International Confederation of Christian Family Movement, ICCFM.

When the U.S. Catholic bishops designated the 1980s as the “Decade of the Family,” CFM quickly stepped up to the plate to address the diverse needs of families. In addition to its annual program, special books were also published for the widowed, divorced and separated, teens, families in crisis, and middle-years families.

In 1987, CFM contributed to a consultation with the U.S. bishops in preparation for the synod in Rome on the Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World. CFM also provided input to the U.S. bishops’ 1994 pastoral, Follow the Way of Love. The next year, CFM launched “Taking the Time to Make a Difference,” a syndicated column repeatedly honored by the Catholic Press Association.

The National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers presented CFM with its special-recognition award in 1993 for enhancing the quality of life for families. Three years later, CFM was one of the founding members of the Families Against Violence Advocacy Network, and in 1999 received FAVAN’s Circles of Peace Award.

In that same year, CFM celebrated 50 years of forming families through action with a gala jubilee celebration at Notre Dame University, and the Hillenbrand Institute awarded CFM its prestigious Salt and Light Award.

CFM-USA Presidents, Jane and Peter Buchbauer, served as advisors to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Marriage, from 2002-2005.
How CFM Is Supported

From the original CFM groups over fifty years ago, CFM has grown into both a national and an international movement. At first, the movement’s expenses were borne by the founders -- personal out-of-pocket expenses, operating out of the space in one’s own home, donations of goods and services by sympathetic third-party donors.

As the movement grew through the commitment and involvement of thousands of couples, the logistics of servicing and coordinating the larger numbers of people exceeded the volunteer contributions of time and money.

Thus, a national office is absolutely necessary to coordinate and serve the needs of CFM over a vast geographical area. It should be obvious that such an office needs grass-roots support to continue to function.

The major source of financial support comes from the annual paid memberships of CFMers. This is the lifeblood of our continued existence. Many generous volunteers donate additional time, talent and treasure to make CFM available throughout the world. Of course, monetary donations are always welcome.

For more information about CFM, contact the National Office at Box 925, Evansville, IN 47706, phone: (812) 962-5508, www.cfm.org, e-mail: office@cfm.org.

National Newsletter

Share your group’s actions with ACT, the national newsletter of the Christian Family Movement by sending information to the editor, act-editor@cfm.org or mail to P.O. Box 925, Evansville, IN 47706-0925. Photos of groups in action are always a plus.

ACT gives pertinent information about the family: sociological, theological, and psychological.

ACT tells you what Christian Families are doing.

ACT keeps you in contact with Christian Families throughout the country and around the world.
ACT will tell you about current CFM programs and family life resources.

Please return the membership form provided by your leader along with your annual dues, so that your membership may be recorded and your copies of ACT sent to you. ACT is included as a part of your membership fee.

Help for Group Leaders

CFM publishes *A Guide for Leaders*. This book can be ordered from the Christian Family Movement, P.O. Box 925, Evansville, IN 47706-0925, 812-962-5508, office@cfm.org. The price is $4. Usually, one couple in each group accepts the challenge of leading a group through the program book, though groups sometimes rotate leadership. A weekly help on leading meetings, “Lessons in Leadership”, is distributed through a CFM e-mail list. E-mail office@cfm.org to receive these mailings.
Group Members

Names: ____________________________________________ ___
Address: ___________________________________________ ___
City/State/Zip:__________________________________________
Phone: ________________________________________________
E-Mail: ____________________________________________ ___

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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.