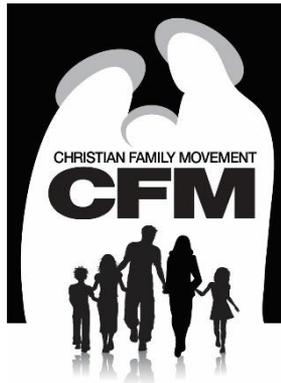


Together for Good

A CFM Program



Christian Family Movement



Together for Good

*An Inquiry Book
Published by the
Christian Family Movement*

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



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Introduction

As members of Christ's family, we are all bound by a lasting commitment to each other and the promise to work together to do good. When couples get married, they vow to make a permanent commitment that will bless them, their families, and the wider society. Their sacramental union means that they desire to be *together for good*, for keeps and for others. Single parents and those who are single again also lead their households to follow Jesus by loving and serving others.

Christian families are *together for good*, but our relationships and commitments come with stresses and struggles.

This CFM program, *Together for Good*, will explore challenges modern families must meet in order to live intentionally as Christ's disciples in today's fast-paced and distracting world.

When couples and family members are intentional in the ways they love each other and live their lives, they are *together for good*, invited to grow toward holiness in their marriages, extended families, and in society at large, and to work together to bring good into the world.

Outline of a CFM Meeting

CFM groups usually meet in homes. If this is impossible because of the size of members' homes or geographical distances involved, groups sometimes meet in a church facility. The group members take turns hosting and leading the meeting.

GATHER AND REPORT ON ACTIONS

Take a few minutes to let one another know how your life has been since you last met. Group members report on the progress of CFM actions taken individually, as a family, or by the group.

OPENING PRAYER AND SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

God's Word and our prayer move group members out of their busy lives and toward the issues of the meeting. Prayer helps them to focus on these issues from a Christian perspective.

SOCIAL INQUIRY - Observe, Judge, Act

OBSERVE

Members should "get the facts." At this stage of the meeting, members should refrain from expressing their opinions about facts. They should try to simply report, like any good objective newspaper reporter. 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. One can editorialize later.

JUDGE

For CFMers, to judge is not to find another person sinful or holy; it is rather the comparison of how things are with how things should be, in accord with Gospel values. To make such a comparison requires objective observation of how things are, as well as a sincere effort to determine the teaching of Jesus.

ACT

If the group judges through prayer, observation, and reflection that things are not as they should be, then ways to bring about a change will come forth from the group. Actions listed in the book are suggestions. The best actions come from the group. They may be directed toward improving family relationships, or toward the community and beyond.

TAKE CFM HOME

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

CLOSING PRAYER

Prayer is supplied for each meeting, but this is also a good time to offer prayers for the intentions of the group.

SOCIAL TIME

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

Hosting a CFM Meeting

Many CFM groups rotate hosting the meeting each month. The host often facilitates the meeting, or another member takes this role.

Call the couples in your group 3 to 4 days before the meeting to remind them to come and give directions. Encourage them to do their Acts and Observes before the meeting.

Try to involve your children 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. Keep refreshments simple.

Provide beverages (soft drinks, coffee, tea) and some sort of dessert after the meeting. Some groups begin with a meal.

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.

Ask for volunteers to read sections of the chapter aloud. It is good to hear many different voices read. 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 are spending more time on one question, call a “time out” to get on track or skip a question or two to keep things moving.

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.



ONE

Family as Church in the World: Living Courageously

Focus: The importance of remaining intentional (purposeful and deliberate) in our vocation as family amidst the pressures and expectations placed on us by the outside world.

GATHER

OPENING PRAYER

Send us your peace, Lord, that as families,
We may think and act harmoniously.
Send us your grace, Lord, that as families,
We may be content and grateful for your gifts.
Send us your strength, Lord, that as families,
We may resist discord and dissension.
Send us your light, Lord, that as families,
We may abolish darkness and shadow.
Send us your love, Lord, that as families,
We may unite in love with one another and other families.
Amen.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

"But the LORD's mercy is from age to age,
toward those who fear him.
His salvation is for the children's children
of those who keep his covenant,
and remember to carry out his precepts." - Psalm 103:17-18

“I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.”

- Romans 12:1-2

1. What is the essence of the covenant proclaimed in Psalm 103?
2. What aspects of contemporary culture must Christians resist in order to remain pleasing and good in God's eyes? How can we renew our minds to discern what is the will of God, good, pleasing and perfect as the Romans passage suggests?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

As leaders of their Domestic Churches, parents and other adult relatives provide children's first encounter with the Christian vision. It is an awesome responsibility.

"The family as 'domestic church' is a place of encounter with Christ within the community of a particular Christian family — a place where each member of the family has an important role. In other words, the 'mission' of the family in the task of evangelization is to be what it is called to be--that is, to live its daily life as a Christian family or as St. John Paul II said so often, 'Families become what you are!'

The family's mission to 'guard, reveal and communicate love'--like the parish community--does not exist in an ideal place. The truth and beauty of the family remains to be communicated to every Christian family, even those that are fragile, wounded or broken. These families too may read the words of St. Paul with confidence: 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?' (Romans 8:35). And they may find in that confidence a path of hope and healing.

During his visit to the Philippines, Pope Francis cited the need for “holy and loving families to protect the beauty and

truth of the family in God's plan and to be an example for other families."

- Knights of Columbus, *Building the Domestic Church*

The family has a mission -- to nurture the faith life of the parents and children as individuals, but also as a family unit. As individuals, parents must encounter Christ and provide the opportunities for their children to encounter Christ. They help their children to discern their role in the family, in the church, in the world, and then send them out. What a powerful witness is the love of parents and children for one another, and then as a family to the world!

"Single men and women live out their vocations in the world and have a unique opportunity to serve the Lord anytime, anywhere and with their whole hearts. They are like a special task force that can be sent wherever God needs them." (This includes occupations and volunteer services that support the domestic church.) "This way of life, whether temporary or lasting one's whole life, is much more than just waiting for something to happen. Single people are called by God to do great things and to become saints."

- John Noonan, *What Is My Vocation*

From your personal experience, **OBSERVE:**

1. Describe encounters you have had with others that spoke strongly to you of what it meant to be Christian and inspired you to live your faith boldly. Ask your children who has inspired them in their faith life?
2. Name the ways you have observed your family and other families "guard, reveal and communicate love," not only within their homes, but in public spaces.
3. What ways exist in your parish and diocese for children and adolescents to contribute to the life of the Church? Does your CFM group actively engage with these missions?

4. Name some of the extraordinary challenges with which some families cope.

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

1. How might our cultural values of Patriotism, Nationalism, War, Individualism and Materialism be at odds with Christian family values?
2. How can you imagine your family or your CFM group influencing cultural change? Do you see this as an important and/or possible mission for the Christian family?
3. With which gifts of the Holy Spirit has God blessed your family? How can you use them to influence society?
4. What does it mean to you to be a "domestic church"? How do you try to teach this concept to your children? How are thriving "domestic churches" vital to the growth and health of the Church at large?

Based on what has been discussed, **ACT**:

1. If your family does not already have a regular time for prayer, bring the family members together and choose a time and a way of praying together within your home. Create a family altar, and grow in your understanding of the domestic church. See this site for suggestions: <https://www.fisheaters.com/domesticchurch.html>
2. Hold a family meeting and learn about the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, described in Romans 12:6-8, 1 Peter 4:9-10, 1 Corinthians 12:8-1, Galatians 5:22-23. Ask each member to name a gift with which they have been blessed (children may need help with this). Then ask each one to name some way they think they can make their world a better place by using their gift.

3. Establish an ongoing correspondence with a CFM group in another area of the country or in another country. Families can take turns sharing photos and family stories as well as telling each other about actions in which their CFM group is engaged. Contact the CFM national office to learn how you can get a pen pal.
4. As a group or with your family (or both), read and discuss one or all of the resources below and report at next meeting.
 - "American Values are Not Necessarily Christian Values."
<https://www.westernseminary.edu/transformedblog/2015/01/28/american-values-are-not-necessarily-christian-values/>
 - "Families Matter: Why the domestic church is essential to the new evangelization," America Magazine, July 15, 2013. <https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/families-matter>
 - "The Domestic Church: The Catholic Home,"
<https://www.fisheaters.com/domesticchurch.html>

OUR ACTION

TAKE CFM HOME

1. Ask your children what they think it means to be a Catholic Christian? There are, for this discussion, no wrong answers – just ones that will enlighten you as parents.
2. Work with your children to name something they believe is wrong in the world. Again, anything goes, but you can direct the answers somewhat with questions like “Why do you think that’s true? When did you see that?”
3. Talk about how Jesus might want us to respond to these “bad things.” How can we make a difference, even if it’s just a small one?

LOOK AHEAD TO THE NEXT MEETING

Date:

Time:

Place:

1. Look ahead at the “Observe” questions for the next meeting.
2. Who could you invite to join your group?

If children have come to the meeting with their parents, gather them to join you in the closing prayer. Feel free to include any personal intentions anyone in the group might have.

CLOSING PRAYER

Come, Holy Spirit,

Gift us with wisdom, that we may share your light with the world.

Gift us with understanding, so we may profoundly appreciate your truth.

Gift us with counsel, that we may judge your will in difficult situations.

Gift us with fortitude, that we may remain firm in doing good and enduring evil.

Gift us with knowledge, that we may perceive the greatness of your love for us.

Gift us with piety, so we may recognize how deeply we belong to you.

Gift us with fear of the Lord, so that we may be filled with a joyful awareness of God’s grandeur, knowing that only in him will our hearts find true peace.

In Jesus’ name, we ask.

Amen.

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



TWO

Caregiving: The Job That Never Ends

Focus: Finding a way to bring the best of ourselves to the task of caring for our loved ones so that we can be intentional in our familial caregiving. We evolve from caring for ourselves, to caring for our spouses, to caring for our children/aging parents/grandchildren. We feel torn in so many directions!

GATHER

Play and sing “The Servant Song,” recording available here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYpH3y4608E>

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

You have given us the model of life in the Holy Family of Nazareth.

Help us, O Loving Father, to make our family another Nazareth where love, peace and joy reign.

May it be deeply contemplative, intensely Eucharistic, revived with Joy.

Help us to stay together in joy and sorrow in family prayer.

Teach us to see Jesus in the members of our families, especially in their distressing disguise.

May the Eucharistic heart of Jesus make our hearts humble like His and help us to carry out our family duties in a holy way.

May we love one another as God loves each one of us, more and more each day, and forgive each other’s faults as You forgive our sins.

Help us, O Loving Father, to take whatever you give and give whatever you take with a big smile.

Immaculate Heart of Mary, cause of our joy: Pray for us.

St. Joseph: Pray for us.

Holy Guardian Angels, be always with us, guide and protect us.

Amen.

- St. Teresa of Calcutta, *Prayer for the Family*

REPORT ON ACTIONS

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

"Therefore, take these words of mine into your heart and soul. Bind them on your arm as a sign, and let them be as a pendant on your forehead. Teach them to your children, speaking of them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up, and write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates."

- Deuteronomy 11:18-20

"Those who honor their father will have joy in their own children,

and when they pray, they are heard.

Those who respect their father will live a long life;

those who obey the Lord honor their mother.

Those who fear the Lord honor their father,

and serve their parents as masters.

In word and deed honor your father,

that all blessings may come to you.

A father's blessing gives a person firm roots,

but a mother's curse uproots the growing plant.

Do not glory in your father's disgrace,

for that is no glory to you!

A father's glory is glory also for oneself;

they multiply sin who demean their mother.

My son, be steadfast in honoring your father;

do not grieve him as long as he lives.

Even if his mind fails, be considerate of him;

do not revile him because you are in your prime.

Kindness to a father will not be forgotten;
it will serve as a sin offering—it will take lasting root."
- Sirach 3:5-14

"Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold, your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his home."
- John 19:25-27

1. How does the Old Testament instruct us to be caregivers?
2. How did Jesus care for others in his ministry during his life and up to his death?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

"Against this backdrop of love so central to the Christian experience of marriage and the family, another virtue stands out, one often overlooked in our world of frenetic and superficial relationships. It is tenderness."

- Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 28

According to the *Caregiver Action Network*:

- More than 65 million people, 29% of the U.S. population, provide care for a chronically ill, disabled, or aged family member or friend during any given year and spend an average of 20 hours per week providing care for their loved one.
- Approximately 66% of family caregivers are women. More than 37% have children or grandchildren under 18 years old living with them.
- 14% of family caregivers care for a special needs child with an estimated 16.8 million caring for special needs children under 18 years old. 55% of these caregivers are caring for their own children.

“The Fathers (at the Synod on the Family) also called particular attention to “families of persons with special needs, where the unexpected challenge of dealing with a disability can upset a family’s equilibrium, desires and expectations... Families who lovingly accept the difficult trial of a child with special needs are greatly to be admired. They render the Church and society an invaluable witness of faithfulness to the gift of life. In these situations, the family can discover, together with the Christian community, new approaches, new ways of acting, a different way of understanding and identifying with others, by welcoming and caring for the mystery of the frailty of human life. People with disabilities are a gift for the family and an opportunity to grow in love, mutual aid and unity... If the family, in the light of the faith, accepts the presence of persons with special needs, they will be able to recognize and ensure the quality and value of every human life, with its proper needs, rights and opportunities.”

- Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 47

“Miss no single opportunity of making some small sacrifice, here by a smiling look, there by a kindly word; always doing the smallest right and doing it all for love.” - St. Therese of Lisieux

"Do we know the poor in our house, in our family? Perhaps they are not hungry for a piece of bread. Perhaps our children, husband, wife are not hungry, or naked, or dispossessed, but are you sure there is no one there who feels unwanted, deprived of affection?... Know the poorest of the poor among your neighbors, in your neighborhoods, in your town, in your city, perhaps in your own family. When you know them, that will lead you to love them."

— St. Teresa of Calcutta

From your personal experience, **OBSERVE:**

1. Reflect on your own experiences of caregiving. In what ways are you or have you been caregivers in your family? How have you witnessed friends and family provide care?

2. What responsibilities do we have as parents to care for our children? What challenges do we face in raising them toward faithful adulthood?
3. Reflect on how grandparents have provided care to our families, both our own grandparents and our children's grandparents. How have they provided support and been a blessing to your family? How have aging grandparents been cared for in your family? What challenges or strains have those relationships placed on your family?
4. We often think of caregiving as taking care of children, the sick, and the elderly. Give examples of other ways that people behave as caregivers and what we learn from them.

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

1. How can we set a model of respecting the dignity of all human life through caregiving?
2. Why is it difficult to provide care? Why is it important for a caregiver to take care of himself/herself?
3. What are the benefits/positive aspects of being a caregiver?
4. How have changes in society and to family structure affected the value of caregiving?

Based on what has been discussed, **ACT**:

1. Identify and reach out to someone in your parish or community who is a caregiver of aging parents, a spouse, special needs or chronically ill children, or other family members. Ask them how you can share their burden. Offer to support them by providing respite care, delivering a meal, visiting them, babysitting, or praying for them. For ideas of how to support them, check out these websites for Catholic caregivers:

- Catholic Caregivers.com, <https://www.catholiccaregivers.com/>
 - Your Aging Parent.com, <http://www.youragingparent.com/>
 - Friends of John the Caregiver, <https://www.fsjc.org/>
 - Learn about ways that your parish can support caregivers and implement one of them at Catholic Caregivers.com: http://www.catholiccaregivers.com/how_your_parish_c_an_help_caregivers.html
2. Read the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ document, *The Blessings of Age*, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/blessings-of-age-english.cfm>.
 Reflect with your spouse or other family members: How might you and your CFM group answer the call to care for aging parents and grandparents, and to support aging members of your community, their families and caregivers with the dignity and respect every human being deserves?
3. Identify an organization that provides caregiving services in your parish or community. Research their mission. Volunteer your time or donate money to support them. Ideas include:
- Little Sisters of the Poor, <http://www.littlesistersofthepoor.org/>
 - St. Vincent de Paul Society, <http://www.svdpusa.org/>
 - Missionaries of Charity, <http://www.motherteresa.org/missionaries-of-charity.html>

OUR ACTION:

TAKE CFM HOME

1. How do you feel cared for by your parents and your family?

2. How have your grandparents helped your family?
3. How do you care for your parents, siblings, grandparents, and family?
4. Who are the helpers or caregivers in our community?

LOOK AHEAD TO THE NEXT MEETING

Date:

Time:

Place:

1. Look ahead at the “Observe” questions for the next meeting.
2. Who could you invite to join your group?

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

CLOSING PRAYER

A Blessing for Caregivers

May you see with tender eyes the wounds of those before you.
May you hear with well-tuned ears the unspoken needs of those whose voices are muted.

May you hold with gentle hands the bodies and the spirits of those you care for.

May the beauty of soul, the strength of spirit, the wholeness of being lead you, inspire you, and let you know your own beauty of soul, strength of spirit, wholeness of being.

May you know that, as you care for others, God cares for you, sees you, holds you tenderly.

Amen.

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

- Sr. Juliana Casey, IHM

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



THREE

Intentional Communication: Affirmation and Criticism

Focus: In this meeting, we will explore the experience of being purposeful in our communication of affirmation and criticism, in hopes of becoming better communicators at home and in the community.

GATHER

OPENING PRAYER

Dear Lord, we gather together to reflect on your words. We ask for your blessings as we examine the art of intentional communication. May we be graced with new understanding and insight. May we grow in our ability to be loving, truthful, just and uplifting with all we meet so that we may become a reflection of your love to the world. Amen.

REPORT ON ACTIONS

Take time to report on how you engaged in action recently. It is encouraging to hear what others are doing and prompts us to put our faith into practice more intentionally.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

“No foul language should come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for needed edification, that it may impart grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were sealed for the day of redemption. All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must be removed

from you, along with all malice. (And) be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ.”
- Ephesians 4:29-32

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” - Philippians 4:8

1. Why did Paul encourage the Philippians to focus on excellence and praise? What role do words play in the healthy relationships in a Christian community like Ephesus or Philippi?
2. Do you think the Scripture quotes above are examples of affirmation or criticism? Or both? Why?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

Communication is the lifeblood of relationship. All relationships depend on good communication which must, if we are honest and loving, involve both affirmation and criticism. Think of all the ways we communicate with each other: verbally, written word, text messages, pictures, body language, and even silence. Sometimes when we don't say anything, our message is quite clearly received. But when communication is lax, when we are lazy and communicate poorly, our relationships can suffer. When we indiscriminately criticize, we can cause harm.

“...The Information Age is shaping generations much like the Industrial Revolution did with manufacturing, and changing how humans contributed to the economy. These days, however, we are not just faced with just the innovation of a new assembly line or product. The Information Age brings with it a complete shift in the fundamental way that people communicate and interact with other persons around them; in their families, in their jobs, in their communities, as well as

how they interact with the global community of people that are now all connected through the Internet.”

- Stephanie Patka, "Why the Catholic Church needs to take communications seriously"

“When I think of my closest friendships, all of them, without exception, are relationships in which we do dialogue full throttle. Knock-down, drag-out bliss, enjoying every minute of our joint journey into the Unknown. And it is in those relationships that my deepest, most impactful, challenging, meaningful, and life-changing insights emerge. Over drinks, over meals, during walks, while working on projects together, we discuss difficult, fascinating, complex, banal, transcendent issues. Grimacing, pounding the table, shaking heads, nodding, laughing, modulating voice pitch—it’s a wild, unruly, meandering encounter from which I always walk away enlightened, challenged, uplifted, humbler, wiser.”

- Dr. Tom Neal, "The Art of Dialogue"

“Despite what some people say, there is no such thing as constructive criticism. Criticism triggers a person to become defensive and protect themselves from an attack, which blocks the resolution of a conflict.”

- Kyle Benson, "Transforming Criticism into Wishes:
A Recipe for Successful Conflict"

"In research [on communication], the factor that made the greatest difference between the most and least successful teams was the ratio of positive comments ('I agree with that.' or 'That’s a terrific idea.') to negative comments ('I don’t agree with you.' and 'We shouldn’t even consider doing that.') that the participants made to one another. The average ratio for the highest-performing teams was 5.6 (that is, nearly six positive comments for every negative one).”

- Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman, "The Ideal Praise-to-Criticism Ratio"

From your personal experience, **OBSERVE:**

1. Give an example of a time when you were deliberate and purposeful in your affirmation of another and of your criticism of another.
2. In regards to question #1, how were your comments received? Would you choose to say things differently if you had the chance to do it again?
3. What are the impediments to practicing intentional affirmation and/or criticism in the home, in the work place, or with the general public?
4. Tell about a time you received criticism which led to personal growth.

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

1. What makes criticism constructive instead of destructive? Do you agree with the quote in the Social Inquiry "there is no such thing as constructive criticism?"
2. One child in a neighborhood playgroup was consistently misbehaving, creating havoc among the toddlers and spoiling the social aspect of the gathering for the children and the adults. Eventually, the group organizer told the parent that she and her child were no longer welcome in the group due to her son's inability to get along with others. What, if any, intentional criticisms and/or affirmations could have been offered to the parent? To the members of the playgroup?
3. In the musical "Hamilton," Aaron Burr tells Alexander Hamilton to "talk less, smile more." Burr offered this constructive criticism to Hamilton, whom he observed to be over-sharing his strong political opinions. When is withholding your personal beliefs sage advice?

4. An author writes in his acknowledgements, “I am deeply grateful to those who read my drafts and offered 'no-holds-barred advice'--the best kind. At other times, they praised my drafts even when they didn't deserve it. Their enthusiasm was contagious and fueled my work.”
 - How difficult is it to discern when to speak “no-holds-barred” and when to invest your energies as cheerleader?
 - Are you able to articulate your need for one or the other forms of advice?
 - How might you become better at these skills?
5. How would living and teaching the cardinal virtues--prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance--in our homes transform our ability to communicate with others?

Based on what has been discussed, **ACT:**

1. Be a cheerleader, and leave notes of encouragement and affirmation for your spouse, child, parent or friend to find.
2. Practice intentional communication at the public level: write to your local or state government official with words of affirmation and encouragement.
3. Include Psalm 19:15 in your daily prayer: “Let the words of my mouth be acceptable, the thoughts of my heart before you, Lord, my rock and my redeemer.”
4. Make a commitment to say five positive things to a member of your family for one week. At the end of the week, talk with them and find out if they noticed.
5. Read about a research-based approach to relationships by Kyle Benson for ideas for “transforming criticism into wishes.” <https://www.gottman.com/blog/transforming-criticism-into-wishes-a-recipe-for-successful-conflict/>. Share what you learned with a family member.

OUR ACTION:

TAKE CFM HOME

- As a family, attend Reconciliation, practicing intentional communication with God, followed by a meal of thanksgiving, where each family member offers something for which they are very thankful.
- Have your family members go around the table and ask each person to say something they like or admire about each member of the family.

LOOK AHEAD TO THE NEXT MEETING

Date:

Time:

Place:

1. Look ahead at the “Observe” questions for the next meeting.
2. Who could you invite to join your group?

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

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to communicate effectively. Give us the energy, patience and wisdom needed to be intentional with our communications so that the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts will be acceptable to God.
Amen.

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



FOUR

Reaching Out to Do Good

Focus: This meeting explores the commission that Christian individuals and families have to model and live out an intentional love of neighbor even when the demands and needs of one's own family are great.

GATHER

OPENING PRAYER

Dear Jesus,
Help me to spread Your fragrance everywhere I go.
Flood my soul with Your spirit and life.
Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly,
That my life may only be a radiance of Yours.
Shine through me, and be so in me
That every soul I come in contact with
May feel Your presence in my soul.
Let them look up and see no longer me, but only Jesus!
Stay with me and then I shall begin to shine as You shine,
So to shine as to be a light to others; The light, O Jesus will be
all from You; none of it will be mine;
It will be you, shining on others through me.
Let me thus praise You the way You love best, by shining on
those around me.
Let me preach You without preaching, not by words but by my
example, by the catching force of the sympathetic influence of
what I do, the evident fullness of the love my heart bears to
You. Amen.

- Blessed John Henry Newman

REPORT ON ACTIONS

Take time to report on how you engaged in action recently. It is encouraging to hear what others are doing and prompts us to put our faith into practice more intentionally.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

“Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them: if prophecy, in proportion to the faith; if ministry, in ministering; if one is a teacher, in teaching; if one exhorts, in exhortation; if one contributes, in generosity; if one is over others, with diligence; if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.”
- Romans 12:6-8

"Then the righteous will answer him and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?’ And the king will say to them in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’"
- Matthew 25:37-40

1. What advantages do you see in people having gifts that differ? How might these differences cause conflicts among people?
2. What could make it difficult to recognize Christ in another person who might be seeking help?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

From the *Catholic Stand* website:

- [Why Volunteer?](#) As part of the Mystical Body of Christ, we’ve each received gifts unique to our position in the Body, with graces that equip us for our work within the Church. If that’s the case, why do so few Catholics volunteer to use their gifts for the benefit of the Church?

- Who's Doing All the Work? At your parish, who makes up the cadre of dedicated volunteers that keep it running smoothly? Research conducted some time ago by the Dynamic Catholic Institute revealed some startling findings: In a typical Catholic parish, 7% or less of registered parishioners generally contribute 80% or more of the financial support and 80% or more of the volunteer hours worked.
- Common Characteristics of Active Catholics - The research also identified four things that the roughly 7% of more involved Catholics do which the other 93% generally don't do as much of: prayer, study of the faith, generosity and evangelization. Those more involved Catholics have cultivated habits of daily prayer such as praying the Rosary, attending daily Mass and praying through Lectio Divina. They study the faith, continually learning more about it (and as a result seem to be less likely to complain about the positions of the Magisterium and about the Church in general). They also give more time and financial support and are enthusiastic about sharing their faith with others.

Pope Benedict XVI said that Christian volunteer efforts should not merely be “an expression of good will” but should be “based on a personal experience of Christ. He was the first to serve humanity, he freely gave his life for the good of all. That gift was not based on our merits.” He also highlighted the Catholic roots of volunteering found in Christianity’s “concern for safeguarding, without discrimination, the dignity of the human person created in the image and likeness of God.”

- Address marking the European Union's *Year of Volunteering*

"Volunteering together, as a family or as a group with children, sounds great: having time together doing a positive activity and living the value of giving back to the community in some way...But the reality is that volunteering opportunities for families and groups with young children are the hardest types of volunteering to find..."

...The quickest way to get your family or group with young children volunteering is for you to put together your own philanthropic activities that you do mostly from your own home."

- Jayne Cravens, "Family Volunteer: Volunteering by Families with Children"

"Volunteering together could be just what the doctor ordered for hectic family lives. It's like hitting the pause button: You're together and engaging with others, feeling energized—and everyone's focused on the same goal of doing good."

- *Create the Good*, "Family Volunteering"

From your personal experience, **OBSERVE**:

1. Describe an experience about reaching out to others when the demands of your own family made you question your ability to do so.
2. Where do you see families reaching out today? Tell about one example. What do you notice about the families who reach out often to others?
3. Research at least one opportunity where families can get involved and serve in your parish or community. Bring the information to the meeting. You might start here:
 - Catholic Relief Services Parishioners' Initiatives, <https://www.crs.org/get-involved/parishioners>
 - "Edventures with Kids" blog, <https://www.kcedventures.com/blog/30-service-projects-rak-s-for-families-to-do-together>
 - Jayne Cravens' website, <http://www.coyotecomunications.com/stuff/family.shtml>
4. Give some examples of "random acts of kindness" you have witnessed. A RAK may be defined as a selfless act performed by kind people to either help or cheer someone up, for no reason other than to make people happier.

5. What rules or laws limit a family's ability to do volunteer service?

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

1. How might efforts to serve others get in the way of family life? How can we do service for others (not family relations) when we have commitments at home?
2. Why should we reach out to others beyond our families? What unexpected good could come from it?
3. What positive impact could service to others have on the faith development of the family members? What can children learn about love when we help other people?
4. What is the difference to your family's spirituality between giving money to a cause and getting personally involved?
5. How can church or civil authorities assist families to help them to reach out in service to others? Who can we partner with to make action possible?

Based on what has been discussed, **ACT**:

1. Contact one of the service opportunities identified at the meeting, or a local service agency, to offer to volunteer.
2. Do a random act of kindness.
3. Come up with your own service project that involves your whole family or group. Share about the experience in CFM's monthly newsletter, *ACT*, by writing to office@cfm.org. Include a digital photo!

OUR ACTION:

TAKE CFM HOME

1. Have a family meeting to find projects that interest your children.
2. Research volunteer opportunities at your parish, school, or community.
3. Do a random act of kindness for someone in your neighborhood.

LOOK AHEAD TO THE NEXT MEETING

Date:

Time:

Place:

1. Look ahead at the “Observe” questions for chapter 5. #1 requires action before the next meeting. Before the meeting, visit, “Resolving Differences” by Kathy Beirne <http://www.foryourmarriage.org/resolving-differences/> and try one of the communication techniques.
2. Who could you invite to join your group?

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

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.
Amen.

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



FIVE

Dealing with Conflict

Focus: This meeting explores the practice of intentionally pursuing approaches and responses to “conflict” that promote growth and peace in relationships at home and in the world.

GATHER

OPENING PRAYER

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;
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.

- Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

REPORT ON ACTIONS

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

“If your brother sins [against you], go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that ‘every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector.”

-Matthew 18:15-17

1. Why does this reading state that we should first go to our brother who has sinned against us alone, and if that does not work go next with two or three brothers, and then the whole church?
2. In light of the above passage, when we come across people who are unwilling or unable to acknowledge their own wrongdoing and work toward changing their life for the better, what is the Christian way to treat them?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

In his book, *Seven Keys to Long-Term Relationship Success*, communication expert Preston Ni counsels:

- “It’s normal for a couple to quarrel from time to time—just part of what it means to be together. Conflicts and arguments won’t necessarily jeopardize a relationship. In fact, there are times when disagreements can actually bring a couple closer together. The key is in how you and your partner decide to handle the conflict.”
- “Couples with poor conflict resolution skills typically engage in Fight, Flight, or Freeze behaviors. They fight and stay mad, sometimes holding grudges for years. They flee and avoid important issues by sweeping them under the rug. Or, after endless arguments with no resolution in sight, they freeze emotionally and shut down. Someone who

freezes in a relationship typically goes through the motions on the outside, but has stopped caring on the inside.”

- “Successful couples have the ability to solve problems and let it go. They focus on taking care of the issue rather than attacking the person. Even when angry, they find ways to be upset and stay close at the same time. Once the matter is resolved, they forgive and forget. Most importantly, successful couples have the ability to learn and grow through their interpersonal difficulties. Like fine wine, their relationship improves with age and gets better over time.”

Beyond Blue, an organization that provides online information about anxiety depression and suicide, has this advice for resolving family conflicts:

“Disagreements are a healthy part of family life. We’re all individuals with different ideas, personalities and ways of doing things, and we all want to control the TV remote! And while we shouldn’t expect to agree all the time, ongoing conflict and tension can cause stress and damage our relationships. Resolving family conflict effectively also teaches kids how to negotiate and reach compromises, setting them up for strong relationships throughout life.”

Cate Malik, a specialist in family conflict resolution, writes:

“No matter how loving a family is, all families go through conflict. Family conflict is different from other types of conflict for several reasons. First, family members are already highly emotionally attached. These emotions can quickly intensify conflict. Second, family members are involved in long-term relationships and often are required to interact with each other daily. Finally, families are often insular, obeying their own rules and resisting outside interference. These characteristics can lead to long, tangled, painful conflicts.”

From your personal experience, **OBSERVE:**

1. Before the meeting, visit “Resolving Differences” by Kathy Beirne, <http://www.foryourmarriage.org/resolving-differences/> and try one of the communication techniques. Share your experience as you feel comfortable.
2. Give an example of a “healthy” way of handling conflict within a family.
3. Give an example of a time you experienced a misunderstanding with another that did not result in conflict. How did you avoid conflict and resolve the situation?
4. Give an example of a time when family members could not successfully resolve a conflict. What tools were necessary for family members to be able to resolve conflicts successfully?

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

1. When might we need to “take a break” from trying to resolve a conflict? Where should we seek help when someone has a hard heart or is unwilling to reconcile?
2. Recall some of the techniques that struck you from the social inquiry or observes. How, when amid conflict, can we continue to show love and respect to individuals with whom we disagree? What might a family have to gain from working through such an experience together?
3. If you are unwilling or unable to forgive someone, what effect does it have on you? On the other person?
4. How has God given us the perfect model for reconciliation within our homes?
5. When, if ever, is it time to separate from someone with whom you are in conflict?

Based on what has been discussed, **ACT:**

1. If you are part of a long-simmering conflict with someone, offer forgiveness to the other person.
2. Discuss with your spouse or family member the approaches that seem most helpful in your situations of discord. Make a plan. Have it in writing, and remind one another what you both want to happen when conflict arises.
3. Talk with your spouse or family member about the proper place and timing for conflict resolution. Decide whether you want others (i.e. your children) to see the process of disagreement and resolution. Are there others that you want to teach about conflict resolution through example?
4. Discuss as spouses how you wish to handle conflict with your children, especially teenagers and adult children.

OUR ACTION:

TAKE CFM HOME

1. Talk as a family on how to speak when disagreeing. Teach your children how to navigate conflict between themselves and between the parent and child.
2. Use stories or examples from history or current events with your children to compare effective and growth-promoting conflict resolution with ineffective and damaging conflict provocation.

LOOK AHEAD TO THE NEXT MEETING

Date:

Time:

Place:

1. Please note that the OBSERVES for Chapter 6 include a family meeting which is helpful to do prior to the next meeting.

2. Who could you invite to join your group?

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

CLOSING PRAYER - St. John Paul II

Lord Jesus Christ, who are called the Prince of Peace,
who are yourself our peace and reconciliation,
who so often said, "Peace to you," grant us peace.
Make all men and women witnesses of truth, justice, and
brotherly love.

Banish from their hearts whatever might endanger peace.
Enlighten our rulers that they may guarantee and defend the
great gift of peace.

May all peoples on the earth become as brothers and sisters.
May longed-for peace blossom forth
and reign always over us all.
Amen.

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



SIX

Managing Technology: Connected but not “Plugged-In”

Focus: This meeting is about being intentional with the use of technology. How can we balance technology with real-time and screen-free experiences?

GATHER

Invite everyone to take out whatever technological device(s) they have with them -- probably this will primarily be cell phones but might include “Fitbits” or similar exercise devices -- and put them on a center table or at their feet so all can see. Each person shares a word about how this action makes them feel (e.g., fine, nervous, curious, empty, wondering what time it is).

OPENING PRAYER

Amazing God, you created the world out of nothing and made human beings as crown of creation. Each of us came into this world naked. But look how we are now. We have clothes on. We sit on chairs in a home. We smile, we laugh, we worry, and sometimes we feel pain. And we have lots of “stuff.” Some of our stuff is here on the table before us. It is made by machines which humans have thought up, designed, and manufactured. Our stuff comes from the minerals of the earth and minds of our neighbors. Tonight, we come together to reflect on how our electronic stuff enhances our lives and distracts us. May we use the technology in our lives to help our families be “together for

good" and to bring your Spirit more fully into our world.
Amen.

REPORT ON ACTIONS

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

“Behold, I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves;
so be shrewd as serpents and simple as doves.”

- Matthew 10:16

1. As a parent, ponder how bringing technology into your home and allowing your children access to it, is a lot like sending sheep (and myself as the shepherd) into the midst of wolves. How does this Scripture play out in the world of technology/social media?
2. As Christ’s sheep, what makes us effective and/or vulnerable as we navigate the world of technology? How can we be wise while remaining innocent when introducing and using technology in our homes?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

The Big Picture:

- Managing technology in the home starts with assessing how we use our time as well as doing all we can to ensure the appropriate use of media, devices, and the internet.
- Once we put the *time we spend* along with the *purpose* for using various technological devices in the context of our whole family life, we can then move on to discerning adjustments we may want to make.

Family Guidelines:

Common practices that experts recommend for family use of technology are:

- Keep meals sacred. This goes beyond saying grace and trying to minimize squabbling. Typically, it means no media (TV or phones) during meals.
- People first. Personal presence trumps technological interruptions. If you're talking face-to-face with someone, give your full attention to that person. Resist the temptation to check email or a buzzing phone.
- Limit media time. Beyond internet use needed for a job or school, agree on time and content limits for social and recreational use.
- Keep family computers in a common area. This helps to keep everyone accountable. What's everyone searching online at home, and how much time is spent doing so?
- No phones in children's bedrooms.
- Become a media-literate parent. Check out sites like NetSmartz, <https://www.netsmartz.org/internetsafety>

Impact of Technology on Relationships:

“The Net is an opportunity to promote encounter with others, but it can also increase our self-isolation, like a web that can entrap us,” (Pope Francis) said, noting that young people are especially susceptible to the illusion that digital connections can satisfy their need for genuine relationships. With this mentality, there is a danger of becoming “social hermits” who risk “alienating themselves completely from society,” he said, adding that the situation “reveals a serious rupture in the relational fabric of society, one we cannot ignore.”

– Pope Francis, [*Message for World Communications Day*](#)

We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge that the use of internet pornography is destroying relationships, and is a major concern among many families in this technological age. Statistics from the organization Covenant Eyes that shed light on the use of technology to access pornography are alarming.

- Webroot Cybersecurity says 28,258 users are watching pornography every second.
- 40 million Americans regularly visit porn sites.

- 35% of all Internet downloads are related to pornography.

Benefits and Risks:

"Many benefits flow from this new culture of communication: families are able to maintain contact across great distances; students and researchers have more immediate and easier access to documents, sources and scientific discoveries, hence they can work collaboratively from different locations; moreover, the interactive nature of many of the new media facilitates more dynamic forms of learning and communication, thereby contributing to social progress."

- Pope Benedict XVI, [Message for the 43rd World Communication Day](#)

"One of the first things parents notice is that day-to-day communication with their kids is different from the way it was before the invasion of technology. Time chatting in the family room has given way to everyone in their rooms, on their laptops, until dinnertime...But as much as kids love their devices, they, too, feel a disconnect from parents, who often love THEIR devices too...Steiner-Adair believes that one of the key reasons that technology has such an impact on human relationships is the portable nature of it: 'In the old days, the phone would ring and you might be on a call for a bit -- but the phone didn't travel with you all day in your purse or pocket, with the power to pull you away instantly, anywhere, anytime.'"

- Lynne Gonski, "How Technology Impacts Families"

From your personal experience, **OBSERVE:**

1. Answer the following questions before your meeting, and come prepared to share:
 - What media devices do I currently have in my home? (TV, radio, computer, tablets, phones, VCR/DVD, etc.)
 - How much time in a typical day does each person in my family spend using a device? Specify work-related and recreational.

- How much time in a typical day do I spend talking with or recreating with my spouse or children without technology?
2. Regarding technology and social media, do I consider myself to be pretty knowledgeable and shrewd, or am I more of a “techno-peasant”?
 3. What are my primary news sources (newspaper, magazines, TV, radio, or online sources such as Facebook, blogs, emails, newsletters)?
 4. List the ways the use of technology in your home improves your quality of life. How does the misuse of technology negatively impact your home life?

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

1. What or who should determine the devices an individual within a family should own and how it is to be used?
Consider:
 - what technology to own
 - time limits
 - where technology is located
 - content (evaluating age appropriate use)
 - alternative recreation
2. How can a family keep the proper balance between information technology, social media and personal interaction?
3. How do friends, ads and other unsolicited sources draw us into spending more time with technology than we would otherwise do?
4. How does the mix of your family’s talents (including tech savvyiness) make for better times together? How does your family make decisions that all are willing to abide by?

Based on what has been discussed, **ACT:**

1. Find some quiet time this month to reflect upon the following questions. Pray for God’s Wisdom. Consider journaling your answers.
 - What are the most satisfying and enjoyable activities I do with my spouse or children? What brings us the most joy when we are together?
 - What would an ideal day look like for me? How many hours would I spend sleeping, eating, at my job, with my spouse, with my children? What gets in the way of making this a reality?
 - What adjustments could I make regarding the amount of time I spend with technology that would help bring a better balance to my life? Consider the personal rhythm of my life, how I balance home vs. work, time for prayer, exercise, sleep, etc.
 - What adjustments could I make regarding the amount of time I spend with my spouse, my children and family, and my community?
2. Depending on the needs of your family, learn more about one of the following topics at the links provided:
 - By family life minister and coach Susan Vogt:
“Technology Tips & Traps for Couples,”
<http://www.susanvogt.net/EnrichmentEx.htm#technologyinmarriage>
 - “Technology Tips for Families,”
<http://www.susanvogt.net/EnrichmentEx.htm#TechnologyTipsforFamilies>
 - “Cell Phones & Kids,”
<http://www.susanvogt.net/EnrichmentEx.htm#CellPhonesAndKids>

- By *Childnet International*:
“Free Internet Safety Resources for Parents”
<https://www.childnet.com/blog/free-internet-safety-resources-for-parents>

3. If overuse of technology and social media is a problem in your family, devise a plan that addresses time limits, where and when devices can be used, how to counter peer pressure, phone etiquette, etc.
4. Decide what safeguards are needed in your home, and learn about parental controls.
5. If use of technology is keeping you or your family from physical activity or sufficient family time, develop an exercise plan, fun outside or active recreational times, both alone and together.

OUR ACTION:

TAKE CFM HOME

1. Hold a family meeting to evaluate how balanced and satisfied you are with what technology is in your home and how it is used.
2. Decide if any devices are stealing time from family interaction time, sleep, work or school commitments. Is there anything to let go of?

LOOK AHEAD TO THE NEXT MEETING

Date:

Place:

Time:

1. Look ahead at the “Observe” questions for Chapter 7. Notice that Observe 1 requires action before the next meeting. In preparation for the next CFM meeting, hold a family meeting to reflect upon your family's spirituality. Directions are provided in Chapter 8.
2. Who could you invite to join your group?

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

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God, we put our families in your hands. Help us not only to be smart about technology but wise in its use. May our use of technology and social media bring our marriages and our families closer to each other and to You.
Amen.

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



SEVEN

Family Spirituality

Focus: This meeting is about being intentional in creating opportunities to grow in our relationship with God when a free quiet moment can seem impossible to come by. Children need to have silence/time to develop their personal relationship with God just as the parents do. A communal family prayer time is just as important.

GATHER

OPENING PRAYER

Dear God, thank you for the opportunity we have as families to grow together as your sons and daughters. We ask you to open our hearts to the ways you call us each day to love you and one another more fully through Jesus Christ, your son. It is not always easy for us to center our family life on Christ, and we ask for an ever-deepening desire to do so. We know it is through the gift of the Holy Spirit that we fulfill this desire. We ask for a greater awareness of the work of your Spirit so that your love is reflected in our homes and in all that we do. May we support one another in a joyous family spirituality that builds your Kingdom. Amen.

REPORT ON ACTIONS

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

"Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with your whole heart, and with your whole being, and with your whole

strength. Take to heart these words which I command you today. Keep repeating them to your children. Recite them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them on your arm 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 6:5-9

"Is God indeed to dwell on earth? If the heavens and the highest heavens cannot contain you, how much less this house which I have built! Regard kindly the prayer and petition of your servant, LORD, my God, and listen to the cry of supplication which I, your servant, utter before you this day. May your eyes be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you said, 'My name shall be there; listen to the prayer your servant makes toward this place.'"

- 1 Kings 8:27-29

1. In what ways do you teach and "keep repeating" the commandment to love God in your home?
2. How do you show the value of God's presence in your home- Physically? Spiritually?
3. Are there favorite traditional prayers that come to mind as you reflect upon the ways your family asks for God's favor?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

In "Family Life as Spiritual Practice: Spiritual Disciplines of the Domestic Church," Wendy Wright shares:

"For me, the spiritual art of negotiating the busyness of family life has been twofold. First, I have in some sense surrendered to the fact that my life is essentially one of availability. When our children were young, I felt this most intensely in the twenty-four-hour-a-day, mom-on-call experience... The availability I'm talking about is not the doormat variety; it is a

more profound willingness, in things essential, to be present to others in the family, to carry their deepest interests always in your mind, to attend thoughtfully to their genuine needs, and to have the contours of your own heart stretched by the unexpected, inexplicable particularity of each of those persons you have been given to love. In this lies the beginning of our being able to love as God has loved us."

She continues, "The crucial discipline to be exercised, and the one I am constantly called to practice again and again, is found in distinguishing true availability from all the demands that claim us. Americans today live in what is perhaps the most speeded up society ever to exist on earth. We are barraged by multitudinous, simultaneous instant messages about all the things we must have and must do. We overschedule our children so that they might be the best soccer, baseball, or football players, the most outstanding ballerinas, pianists, computer programmers, rocket scientists—or whatever. We overschedule ourselves so that we might have the best career, house, wardrobe, muscle tone, garden, or résumé. In our drive to have and do everything—immediately—we often seem to have forgotten that frenetic busyness is not synonymous with conscious and attentive care for each other."

"...The second spiritual art of a busy family life, next to genuine availability, is the art of cultivating our sense of the silence that undergirds it all. One might call this art Sabbath keeping. The idea of Sabbath keeping is, of course, embedded in the Jewish and Christian faiths. And where a family's religious observance encourages it to honor the Sabbath in traditional ways, it can be wonderful. The traditional Jewish Sabbath takes place from just before sundown Friday to just after sundown Saturday. Prohibitions from work and travel allow family relationships to become the center of focus for this most holy of days. Similarly, some Christian denominations have held Sunday (not simply the Sunday service) as a day set apart, during which faith and family are emphasized. But Sabbath keeping is not only the observance of a day. It is also about the cultivation of a certain quality of

time. Sabbath time is gracious and still. It is spacious and restorative. It is not merely 'time off' to refuel or run errands and is certainly not to be confused with noisy entertainment or frantic recreational activity."

Wright concludes, "Any time can be Sabbath time if it allows deep, rhythmic rest and rejuvenation to occur. Time set aside for gentle prayer or retreats, walks by the seashore, in a garden, or through the woods, quiet afternoon moments sipping a cup of tea or reading a poem before a warming fire—all these and many more moments can be Sabbath time. They honor the stillness and silence that sustain our lives. What is perhaps most difficult for us is resisting the habit of automatically filling time with activity or filling space with noise. We race from commitment to commitment. Radios and televisions blare while we do housework and homework. We chat on our cell phones while we drive and walk. There are, of course, occasions on which such things are necessary. But I am convinced that the conscious cultivation of Sabbath time is essential to our being able to recognize those graced snapshot moments that continually occur in the midst of our busy family lives."

- Excerpted from her article,
"Family Life as Spiritual Practice: Spiritual Disciplines of the
Domestic Church"

From your personal experience, **OBSERVE:**

1. In preparation for this CFM meeting, hold a family meeting to reflect upon your family spirituality. You might discuss the following questions together:
 - a. Are there regular times of prayer for individual family members at home? What does the rest of the family know about your regular times of prayer? What would you like them to know?
 - b. Are there regular times of prayer for your gathered family at home, such as at meal times? How do these times together make you feel? How do you feel when they are missed?

- c. Are there other ways your family expresses and deepens its spirituality?
 - d. Are there less-formal ways that you grow together as a Christian family?
 - e. How do these experiences bring you closer to God?
2. Think back to your growing-up years. What prayers and other spiritual practices were a part of your family life?
 3. What are the specific challenges to your family’s spiritual practice that you can name?
 4. Can you think of a time when you were “surprised by grace” in the midst of daily family life?

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

1. Are there ways that you would like to expand upon or strengthen your family spirituality? Be as specific as you can.
2. Are there any adjustments that could be made in your family schedule or home environment which might allow you to more fully welcome God into your day-to-day family life?
3. What fruits or benefits of family prayer have you experienced?
4. What other resources might your family use to try to increase your spirituality?

Based on what has been discussed, **ACT**:

1. Hold a follow-up family meeting to develop a family “spiritual growth plan.” Name individual and family goals

for prayer and other spiritual practice.

2. Consider elevating a fruitful family spiritual practice to “tradition,” embracing it more faithfully.
3. Choose one way that you have identified to expand upon or strengthen your family spirituality and focus on that growth opportunity.
4. Choose one challenge to family spiritual practice where you can bring about change and commit to this change.
5. Consider reading Wendy M. Wright’s, “Family Life as Spiritual Practice: Spiritual Disciplines of the Domestic Church.”
6. Try one of the activities described below in “TAKE CFM HOME.”

OUR ACTION:

TAKE CFM HOME

1. Share stories of family prayer and other spiritual growth experiences from your childhood (even young children might have a story to share!). You could do this over dessert and include extended family members or close family friends.
2. Compose a “family prayer.” This might be for everyday or a special occasion.
3. Create a place to gather family prayer intentions. Each member can write on a slip of paper their prayer intention for themselves, someone else, the family, etc. (younger children might need help with this). You could place these in a box, jar, or basket and share them at mealtime or

another moment when you praying as a family.

4. Try out brief periods of meditative silence as a family. You could plan to arrive at Mass five minutes earlier than usual, spend a moment in silence before your family meal prayer, or even dedicate a short period of regular time in the car to quiet contemplation.

LOOK AHEAD TO THE NEXT MEETING

Date:

Time:

Place:

1. Look ahead at the “Observe” questions for the next meeting.
2. Who could you invite to join your group?

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

CLOSING PRAYER

Prayer to the Holy Family

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
in you we contemplate
the splendor of true love;
to you we turn with trust.

Holy Family of Nazareth,
grant that our families too
may be places of communion and prayer,
authentic schools of the Gospel
and small domestic churches.

Holy Family of Nazareth,
may families never again experience
violence, rejection and division;

may all who have been hurt or scandalized
find ready comfort and healing.

Holy Family of Nazareth,
make us once more mindful
of the sacredness and inviolability of the family,
and its beauty in God's plan.
Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
Graciously hear our prayer.
Amen.

- Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*

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



EIGHT

Family Fun & Adventure: Un-busyng Ourselves for What Matters

Focus: This meeting is about being intentionally “recreated” by making time for leisure and recreation for oneself and one’s family. How can we become “more” by doing less of what we have filled our lives up with?

GATHER

Recount a time when you felt rejuvenated as a result of spending quality time with your family and/or spouse.

OPENING PRAYER

Lord, we thank you for bringing us together today and for helping us take time out of our busy days to reflect on how we choose to fill up our lives. Each day is a precious gift and opportunity from you. Help us to recognize the fun and adventure we can create when we take time to un-busy ourselves and focus on what really matters to us. Help us become more by doing less. Amen.

REPORT ON ACTIONS

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

“Why spend your money for what is not bread; your wages for what does not satisfy? Only listen to me, and you shall eat well, you shall delight in rich fare.”
- Isaiah 55:2

“Observe the sabbath day -- keep it holy, as the LORD, your God, commanded you. Six days may labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God. You shall not do any work, either you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your ox or donkey or any work animal, or the resident alien within your gates so that your male and female slave may rest as you do. Remember that you too were once slaves in the land of Egypt, and the LORD, your God, brought you out from there with a strong hand and outstretched arm. That is why the LORD, your GOD, has commanded you to observe the sabbath day.”

- Deuteronomy 5:12-15

Based on your Scripture reflection, what “more” can we experience when we commit ourselves to doing “less” of what we’ve filled our lives up with?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

“Without the Lord and without the day that belongs to him, life does not flourish. Sunday has been transformed in our Western societies into the week-end, into leisure time. Leisure time is something good and necessary, especially amid the mad rush of the modern world; each of us knows this. Yet if leisure time lacks an inner focus, an overall sense of direction, then ultimately it becomes wasted time that neither strengthens nor build us up. Leisure time requires focus -- the encounter with him who is our origin and goal.”

- Pope Benedict XVI

“...Marriage is about adventure...You’re gaining someone to go on adventures with, someone to explore the world with, someone who’s up for stepping out into the unknown with you...How you see your marriage has extraordinary power to shape how you experience marriage. Shared experiences are held by the two of you...they connect you to each other; they create the knowing glances, the inside jokes, the phrases that only you know what they mean.”

- Rob and Kristen Bell, *The Zimzum of Love: A New Way of Understanding Marriage*,

“...Where do we find time for such activities...? We make time, just as we make time for lunch and dinner. Why? Because it is just as essential to our marriage as meals are to our health. Is it difficult? Does it take careful planning? Yes. Does it mean we have to give up some individual activities? Perhaps. Does it mean we do something we don’t particularly enjoy? Certainly. Is it worth it? Without a doubt. What’s in it for me? The pleasure of living with a spouse who feels loved and knowing that I have learned to speak his or her love language fluently.

- Gary Chapman, *The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love That Lasts*

From your personal experience, **OBSERVE:**

1. Describe your daily, weekly, monthly routines over the past three months. Other than work, what do you spend the most time doing? Did you find time to relax and enjoy yourself?
2. Think about some couples or single parents in your life that you know well. What do they do with their families or with each other for leisure?
3. Growing up, how did your family make time for leisure and recreation?

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

1. Do you feel you spend your money and time on things that satisfy you? Think about the things that do or don’t bring you joy. How do they differ?
2. Why might we not set aside downtime? How are our families impacted when there is a lack of downtime?

3. How in-control of your time do you feel? How might we gain better control of our time?
4. Who should be included in deciding how to set aside downtime?
5. Is leisure and recreation best experienced as an individual, a couple, the whole immediate family, your extended family, or all at the same time? Are some forms of downtime better suited for one or more of these groups?

Based on what has been discussed, **ACT:**

1. Write out a list of activities that matter to you and work towards un-busyng yourself for them.
2. Make a list of the barriers that have kept you from un-busyng yourself. For every item listed, think of a solution that will allow time for leisure.
3. Talk with another couple, parent, grandparent, and/or family whose ability to un-busy themselves you admire. Have an open discussion seeking their insights and advice.
4. As a CFM group, plan a fun family activity for your group to do together to celebrate the end of the year – picnic, hike, movie night, bowling, pool party, beach day, camping trip, etc.

OUR ACTION:

TAKE CFM HOME

1. Talk with your family members about the pros and cons of a busy life. Work together to actively plan to set aside time for leisure, recreation, fun, and adventure. Find a cadence that works best for you individually and as a unit.

2. Look through your house together and donate or throw away possessions that don't bring you joy.

LOOK AHEAD TO THE NEXT MEETING

Date:

Time:

Place:

Who could you invite to join your group?

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

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, you have given us 24 hours in each day to spend as we see fit. Open our eyes to the possibilities each new day holds for us. Let us see it truly as an opportunity and not as a burden. Allow us to set aside time for leisure and fun to strengthen our relationships with our loved ones and you. Help us to declutter our lives and minds in order to bring into view the people and experiences that matter to us most. Bestow on us a sense of control over our lives that allows us to truly experience each minute of every day to its fullest.

Amen.

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

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Acknowledgements

The following individuals were an integral part of the production of this book.

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About the Christian Family Movement

When families join the Christian Family Movement, they become part of the national lay movement that is CFM-USA. CFM is a movement because it has a constituency that subscribes to its philosophy, methodology, and theology.

The mission of the Christian Family Movement is to promote Christian marriage and family life, to help people 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 donations.

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

THE COMMUNITY OF CFM

People group together by accident, choice or design, but community is more than this. Members are united in mutual respect (even when they disagree), and they 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 friends and allies in the midst of their parish communities. They look to CFM as a source of continuing education, lively support and regular encouragement.

In 2019, CFM celebrates 70 years of forming families to be missionary disciples through action. CFM-USA is a



member of the **International Confederation of Christian Family Movements**, which is active in more than 40 countries with more than 100,000 families. All the members of the ICCFM share the Observe, Judge, Act methodology. Visit www.iccfm.org to explore CFM’s worldwide activities.

On the 50th anniversary in 1999, CFM held a gala jubilee celebration at the University of Notre Dame, and the Hillenbrand Institute awarded CFM its prestigious Salt and Light Award. CFM participated in the Marriage Summit of Catholic family life organizations, conducted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2012 and 2013, and CFM leaders participated in consultations for the 2016 Synod on the Family in Rome.

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. CFM was a founding member of the Families against Violence Advocacy Network, and in 1999 received FAVAN’s Circles of Peace Award.

In 1987, CFM contributed to a consultation with the U.S. bishops in preparation for the Synod 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*.

HOW CFM IS SUPPORTED

The major source of financial support for CFM comes from the annual donations of CFMers. This is the lifeblood of the Movement’s continued existence. First-year members are asked to contribute \$10; for continuing members the suggested donation is \$40 per family. Many generous volunteers donate additional time, talent and treasure to make CFM available throughout the world.

Please register at <http://www.cfm.org> to belong to CFM -- or you may return a membership form provided by your group leader along with your annual donation to CFM -- so that your membership may be recorded and that you may receive CFM resources. For more information about CFM, visit <https://www.cfm.org/>, or contact the National Office: by email to office@cfm.org or phone 800-581-9824.

NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

Share your group's actions with *ACT*, the national electronic newsletter of the Christian Family Movement, by sending information to office@cfm.org. Photos of groups in action are always a plus.

CONNECT WITH CFM ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- www.facebook.com/ChristianFamilyMovement/
- Share your group's Actions with office@cfm.org to be featured on our Facebook page.
- Twitter account @CFMACT. Please use #CFMACT when posting about your group.

GUIDANCE FOR GROUP LEADERS

You will find leader aids at https://www.cfm.org/leader_materials. Additional helps for leaders are published regularly in *ACT*. Contact office@cfm.org to find CFM group leaders in your area. They will be happy to speak with you on the phone to guide you and share their experience of CFM.



OUR SYMBOL

The CFM symbol shows the Holy Family in silhouette behind a modern family. The family is an active agent of evangelization, participating in the mission of Jesus. With the model of the holy family to guide them, the CFM family is moving forth to bring the message and the love of Christ to a changing world. Father, mother, sons and daughters are Christian emissaries to the world.

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.