

Home - Church

Emphasis

"Churches that Care - Help Families Prepare"

CHURCH - HOME EMPHASIS

RESPONSIBILITY

Emphasis on the home and family should be a year-long part of the church's total ministry. From the pulpit, in the Sunday school and Sunday evening activities, through the social and fellowship plans of the church, should come directives for the Christian home.

Achieving such a program requires planning and careful consideration by the church leadership. The pastor, Christian education leaders, teachers, and children and youth workers must all be aware of their responsibility in this area and of the possibilities for involvement in the ministry to the home.

REASON

A home and family emphasis should accomplish certain goals.

For the Church

- To give guidance and counsel to families in establishing a Christian home.
- To provide family-type activities in a Christian atmosphere of fellowship and recreation.
- To be aware of the family's need for togetherness, thus avoiding a church program which tends to fragmentize the family.

For the Family

- To establish and maintain a Christ-centered home.
- To learn to communicate with one another and develop a meaningful, interpersonal family relationship.
- To find things to do at home as a family, building family unity and togetherness.

The ideas in this manual for a family emphasis in June can be used any time during the year. It would be a good idea to clip this section from the manual and keep it handy for periodic reference and planning.

PLANNING

There should be a total involvement of the church in this family emphasis. Therefore, it is highly recommended that the church leaders (pastor, Sunday school, Crusader Hour, laymen's groups, choir, etc.) meet early in the spring and determine how the church can have a meaningful program for June and throughout the year.

Begin the planning session with a gruelling time of examination and evaluation. Determine what the church is now doing and what it can do in the future. Ask the following questions about your present program. Determine needs and make plans for meeting those needs.

CHURCH AND HOME EVALUATION GUIDE

1. Who in the church is responsible for seeing that the needs of the family are met in the church program?
2. How many nights a week is there some church-related activity scheduled for your members?
3. How many hours a week would the average member spend at the church or in a church-related activity if he attended everything provided for him?
4. Is your S.S. and Crusader Hour departmentalized?
5. Do all the activities in the church take place within departments or groups?
6. Are classes & activities provided for every age group in the church?
7. What times are provided for families to do things together?
8. Are there ways in which your church contributes to the fragmentation of the family unit?
9. Do you have an active Cradle Roll department where workers are on the alert to enroll new babies?
10. Do you have a comfortable, pleasant baby nursery, staffed with capable, concerned workers?
11. What literature for the home have you suggested to parents?
12. How often do entire families sit together during a worship service?
13. How often are families encouraged to have a family altar or family nights together?
14. What guidance has been given to the youth of the church for a good parent-teen relationship.

15. What is the atmosphere like in most of the homes in the congregation?
16. Are you aware of any marital or family problems that exist in homes right now?
17. Are people encouraged to go to the pastor for family or pre-marital counseling?
18. How many families that you know of have a planned, regular devotional time together?

IDEAS

The following suggestions are capsule ideas for church-home programs and activities. The church's concern should be two-fold: for the quality of Christian living in the home itself, and for the ministry of the church to the total family.

PASTOR

1. Sermons/Bulletins/Letters

The pastor is a key figure in the church's ministry to the home. Frequent sermons dealing with family situations and adjustments will provide parents and children with a Bible-based approach to home life. Encouragement for family worship and devotions should come from the pastor as well.

Quotations, scriptures, and brief thoughts about the Christian home in the church bulletin or paper will keep this subject constantly before the congregation. Establish a file containing information on the home. Use these materials often to give family counsel.

An occasional pastoral letter, especially one geared to the family, is another method of giving guidance and encouragement to the home.

2. Children's Sermons

The children who attend the worship services are often overlooked by the pastor. They are expected to sit still and to pay attention, but most worship services are planned for adults.

Some pastors, realizing the need to reach the children also, remedy this situation by including a 5-minute children's sermon in the worship program. This is a very simple message, geared to the children, using scripture and illustrations which children can understand. Sometimes these sermons have a visual illustration as well, such as an object lesson.

A pastor could use this method to bring to the attention of the children their responsibility in the home, the need to obey the scriptures, the roles and relationships of parents and children, and their personal need for Jesus Christ as Savior.

3. Family & Premarital Counseling

Ministering to people means meeting specific, personal needs which cannot always be done in a sermon. The pastor who is equipped and willing to give family and premarital counseling is on the road toward strengthening the Christian home.

Family counseling involves situations where there are problems or difficulties within the home. Such problems may stem from finances, misunderstanding between family members, rebellion in children, personal and emotional problems, lack of adjustment to family living, etc. This type of counseling requires a lot of wisdom and patience, but is greatly needed in an age when 1 out of 4 marriages end in divorce and teenagers in increasing numbers are dropping out of society.

Many pastors insist on at least one counseling session with any couple intending to marry. In many cases this is an opportunity to lead a couple into confessing Christ as personal Savior and Lord. In any case it is an opportunity to help a marriage begin on the right foot, with a solid foundation in the Word, and with the encouragement of the church to make the home Christian. The counseling session is an opportunity for the pastor to give a Family Life Kit or other materials to these young people. Couples intending to marry in the church should be encouraged to make their wedding ceremony a truly Christian occasion.

PROGRAMS

1. Cradle Roll Sunday

An emphasis upon the babies of the church will immediately interest the parents and bring attention to the home. Once or twice a year, feature the Cradle Roll department in Sunday school or church. Work toward an attendance goal for babies and parents for this particular Sunday. Ideas for Cradle Roll Sunday include:

- Taking pictures of each baby (with either or both parents)
- Giving a small gift to each baby
- Placing babies' pictures on a large bulletin board
- Having a baby parade.
- Offering special prayer for babies and parents
- Pastors preaching on "Train Up A Child"
- Sponsoring an afternoon "tea" for mothers of cradle roll babies.

Baby dedications may take place any time during the year, and these can be used as special times to remind parents of the God-given responsibilities to their home and family. The ceremony should be meaningful both to the parents and the congregation.

2. Family Pew Sunday

Publicize one Sunday as a day for entire families to sit together in the church service. Recognize the families with every member present. Emphasize the role of the father as the spiritual leader of the home. Pray for families with unsaved members. If this could be the first Sunday of the month, a special highlight would be to serve communion to family units. The pastor's message could include the importance of family worship.

3. Family Visitation

Plan for every church-related family to receive a visit within a certain amount of time (two months, quarter, year). The purpose of the visit would be to encourage family church attendance and family worship in the home. A small gift such as a devotional book, Christian literature, etc., could be left by the visitor.

4. Adopt-A-Family

This program is similar to #3, except it is broader in scope. Each family adopts an unchurched family (friend or neighbor), with the intention to be a good friend and also to witness to them when there are opportunities, attempting ultimately to win them to Christ. This would include doing things with the family on a social level. It may also include being a "good Samaritan" in time of need.

5. Sunday School Open House OR
Parent-Teacher Meeting

The purpose for such an event is to acquaint parents with the S. S. program and purposes. Arrange displays of the children's handwork and the curriculum in every classroom or department. Ask parents and teachers to discuss the child's development and spiritual needs. Be sure teachers know what their aims are and can convey these to the parents.

Prepare a slide presentation for the parents on this evening. Show pictures from the classrooms which convey what the Sunday school is attempting to teach. The parents can see the broad span of Bible teaching and the methods involved through such a visual presentation.

6. Midweek Family Night

The "traditional" Wednesday evening Bible study and prayer meeting has undergone some recent changes. One of the most dramatic and successful innovations is the making of Wednesday a family night. Many churches provide separate meetings or activities for various age groups, along with a dinner in which everyone participates. This encourages everyone in the family to attend, and still gives something for the family to do together.

7. Discussion Groups

Whether it be in a Sunday school class, during the Crusader Hour, or in some other setting, discussions about family living and the specific "nitty-gritty" issues are healthy and helpful in the church setting. One good idea for a study of this nature is the group use of Bible concordances and topical indexes to look up scriptures dealing with family, home, parents, children, sex, etc. Have them organize these into subjects, analyze their message, and draw some conclusions as to how God views the family marriage. The findings could be mimeographed and shared with the entire congregation.

Occasionally involving adult groups in discussion with the youth groups helps open doors of communication and understanding as well. Panels, small buzz groups, role play, and circle conversation are methods which work well for adult-youth discussions.

8. Distribute Devotional Materials

Be sure that each family has a Family Life Kit, and encourage continued use of it. The devotional book provides help for family quiet times, and the other reading materials are of an inspirational nature.

Occasionally, throughout the month or year, send or give tracts to each family. Tracts on home topics are available from:

Good News Publishers
Westchester, Illinois

Accent Family Crusade
P.O. Box 222
Paramount, California

The Upper Room
1908 Grand Ave.
Nashville, Tennessee

American Bible Society
1865 Broadway
New York, New York 10023

Four or five times a year set up an exhibit of books and materials for the Christian home in prominent location, such as the church foyer.

ACTIVITIES

1. Recreation Night

While it is hoped that Sunday school classes, departments, and other groups within the church will provide some type of social and recreational outlet for every age, occasions that bring the entire family and every age group together are not to be overlooked. One activity that is enjoyed by young and old alike is a recreation night.

Provide a variety of table and team games, such as volleyball, softball, ping pong, shuffleboard, checkers, etc. A time for singing, refreshments, skits and group games can be included also.

2. Neighbor Night

Ask each family in the church to invite another family for an evening of fun and activity. This could be a potluck, a time of recreation, or a variety night with a film, games, refreshments, skits, music, etc. Be sure the guests are introduced to others and are put at ease.

3. Family Picnic

In most localities, June is a good month for a picnic. To make this picnic different from any other picnic or outing, plan with families in mind. The object is to get the various age groups to mingle. Try to be in a location where there is room for games and activity. Each family may provide food for its own members, and family units may sit together on the ground or at tables.

4. Father-Son, Father-Daughter Event

Since Father's Day is in June, the church might plan something special to honor fathers. Or, the church may want to focus on the head of the household any time of the year. Take stock of the fathers in your church, and determine what type of activity would be of interest, and whether it should be with the sons or daughters. Consider the following ideas:

- Father-son campout
- Father-daughter dinner
- Father-son/daughter jamboree
- Father-son/daughter barbecue
- Father-son sports night

IN THE HOME

1. Family Altar

A truly Christian home is Christ-centered. Every Christian home should have a regular time when the family worships Him together. This should be a time that is truly significant to each family member and will draw the family closer together. The elements of the family altar and suggestions for its implementation are covered in the brochure, "The Family Altar". that each home is provided with one of these. If there are teenagers in the church from non-Christian homes, they should be taught the importance and the how-to of family worship in preparation for their future homes.

2. Home Night

When families spent more time together, they were a more closely knit, loyal unit. Today there are so many activities and attractions to draw members away from the home that they are seldom together in one place at one time. Could this be the cause of the so called "communication gap?"

The family unit needs to be the source of love, learning, acceptance, and social adjustment for every individual. Families should make a dedicated effort to spend an occasional evening at home together. The atmosphere should be relaxed, informal, communicative. They can do something together -- playing games, watch t.v., work on a puzzle, make a craft or art object, read, talk, eat. Other times may be spent on individual projects -- sewing, studying, reading, listening to records, working on a hobby with a brief time together for discussion and devotions. Just the knowledge that everyone is in the house at the same time and is available and near has a solidifying, comforting effect.

3. Family Activities

In addition to evenings at home, families should have frequent activities which they can do together, or in the company of other families, such as the following:

picnics	boating	entertainment
vacations	swimming	shopping
outings	camping	sight seeing
work project	eating out	sport event

4. Family Evangelism

Independently of the church's programs and emphasis, Christian families should be witnessing and serving God as a natural part of life. If every family would carry a concern for another family and attempt to win that home for Christ, what a tremendous influence they would be for the kingdom of heaven.

Christian families could "adopt" non-Christian families and use every means for winning them. They could attempt to win the non-Christian members in the homes of teenagers or children who attend the Sunday school. They could invite this adopted family to breakfast on a Sunday morning and then to Sunday school and church following. Through "friendship evangelism" much can be accomplished.

MISCELLANEOUS PROGRAMS FOR CHURCH-HOME EMPHASIS

1. Have frequent testimonies specifically related to family worship and togetherness.
2. Sponsor a "verse of the month" through the church bulletin or paper, and encourage every family to memorize it.
3. Start a "New Parents" group.
4. Avoid drawing mother and father out of the home too often.
5. Encourage families to dedicate their homes to God through a dedication service.
6. Often feature the families of the church in the church bulletin.
7. Emphasize family worship through the family pew.
8. Help every new family to feel at home.
9. Give a dramatic demonstration of a typical family worship.
10. Suggest ways to improve mealtime prayers and conversation.
11. Encourage families to read Christian literature in the home, and help by giving specific suggestion.
12. Encourage young people to make their wedding ceremony distinctively Christian.
13. Use the young adult Sunday school class to teach courses on the Christian home.
14. Organize a program for young married people and single adults (Bible study, fellowship, and service projects).
15. Use films and filmstrips for family education.

A CHRISTIAN HOME IS ONE THAT...

1. Acknowledges the presence and centrality of Christ in all it does.
2. Worships God together through the family altar.
3. Makes the Bible its guide and authority.
4. Proves its love for God's house.
5. Is a faithful steward of all God's gifts.
6. Radiates love and loyalty.
7. Offers a sense of security.
8. Is concerned with the affairs of each individual member.
9. Becomes a place to play and enjoy a life.

BEATITUDES FOR CHRISTIAN MARRIED COUPLES

Blessed are the husband and wife who continue to be affectionate, considerate, and loving after the wedding bells have ceased ringing.

Blessed are the husband and wife who are as polite and courteous to one another as they are to their friends.

Blessed are they who have a sense of humor, for this attribute will be a handy shock absorber.

Blessed are the married couples who abstain from the use of alcoholic beverages.

Blessed are they who love their mates more than any other person in the world and who joyfully fulfill their marriage vow of a lifetime of fidelity and mutual helpfulness to one another.

Blessed are they who attain parenthood, for children are a heritage of the Lord.

Blessed are they who remember to thank God for their food before they partake of it and who set apart some time each day for the reading of the Bible and prayer.

Blessed are those mates who never speak loudly to one another and who make their home a place "where seldom is heard a discouraging word."

Blessed are the husband and wife who faithfully attend the worship services of the church and who work together in the church for the advancement of Christ's Kingdom...whose daily altar is always opened with devotions.

Blessed are the husband and wife who can work out the problems of adjustments without interference from relatives.

Blessed is the couple who has a complete understanding about financial matters and who has worked out a perfect partnership with all money under the control of both...whose first love prompts ten percent to their church.

Blessed are the husband and wife who humbly dedicate their lives and their homes to Christ and practice the teachings of Christ in the home by being unselfish, loyal and loving.

--Adapted