

From House to Home

Toward Greater Family Togetherness

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Overview

This seminar links “family togetherness” with the basic definition of “home.” It considers forces that militate against family togetherness and how Christian families can cope with these deterrents to togetherness in practical ways. Consideration is given to applying biblical principles to developing the atmosphere of togetherness at home.

Handouts

Worksheet #1 *Basic Unit of Society*
Worksheet #2 *Time with Each Other*
Worksheet #3 *Social Mobility*
Worksheet #4 *Family Qualities*
Worksheet #5 *Christian Family Relationships*
Worksheet #6 *Family Atmosphere*

Presentation Helps

Have you ever thought about the difference between “house” and “home”? In our Greek language, for example, there is a distinct difference between a house (*oikia*) and a home (*oikos*). *Oikia* refers to the *building* in which people live, while *oikos* refers to the *inhabitants* living in the *oikia*. Further, these inhabitants (*oikos*) are not a “home” in the fullest sense unless their life together makes them feel that where they live is a place dear to everyone because of their interpersonal relationships and feelings of comfort, security, warmth, fellowship and friendship. In other words, home is not just a roof over ones head; it is a place of connection, of attachment, a place of refuge from the demands of life.

Happiness in the house does not depend so much on material things as it does upon the atmosphere that is created by the people. Our Greek word for the inhabitants, for this people, whose life together in the *oikos* is known by its relationships of comfort, security, warmth, fellowship and friendship is *oikogeneia*, that is, a “family.”

“Family” is the total of what its members are individually, but even more, it refers to their interrelationships one with the other. “Family” quite literally means “togetherness.”

The Basic Social Unit

Family is the basic unit of society. Think about this concept. [*Use Worksheet #1 Basic Unit of Society*] Consider the following Bible verse:

“So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him. Every beast, every creeping thing, every bird, and whatever creeps on the earth, according to their families, went out of the ark” (Gen. 8:18, 19, NKJV)

What facts concerning families do you see in this verse? As you think of the wider context of this piece of Scripture—the new beginning after the Flood, what is the importance of Noah’s family in the purposes of God? What might be the implications for Christian families living in today’s society? How does the quotation below highlight the strategic significance of the family unit?

The well-being of society, the success of the church, the prosperity of the nation, depend upon home influences” (Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 349).

Forces Threatening Family Togetherness

Many forces in modern living combine to threaten the “togetherness” of the family life.

Group exercise. [*Invite participants to work as a large group to list some of the factors they can identify which threaten family togetherness. Write their list on a flip-chart, chalk board or white board.*]

The home is often no longer the centre of recreation, education, or worship. Thus it is difficult to maintain common interests which involve all its members.

Time with each other. One factor in family togetherness is the amount of time we spend with each other.

Personal/couple exercise. [*Use Worksheet #2 Time with Each Other. Think about your time with your family last week. How much actual time did you spend with them (do not include mealtimes)? Record the approximate amount of time for each day:*]

1. Sunday _____

5. Thursday _____

2. Monday _____

6. Friday _____

3. Tuesday _____

7. Saturday _____

4. Wednesday _____

Total time spent _____

What did this exercise in recording time spent with family mean to you? What are you most pleased about? What would you like to change? How can you make a difference this week?

Social mobility. Families today move often. Commonly, relatives do not live near each other as was more typical of the past. As a result, they do not have the opportunity for close physical contact with each other which can be related to emotional availability and tangible caring for one another.

Individual/family exercise. [*Reflect as individuals or as families on your family members' proximity to each other and the effects of this on family togetherness. Use Worksheet #3 Social Mobility. What impact has social mobility—family movement—had on your family? How has famine, war, economic hardship, illness, persecution, or migration brought change to your family? How do you think this social change in your generation or in previous generations affected you and your children? Given the reality of social mobility, how do you maintain connection?*]

The Atmosphere in the House

“Through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.” Proverbs 24:3, 4 (NKJV)

“In the home it is possible to have a little church which will honor and glorify the Redeemer” (Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 323).

Like the spokes of a wheel, the closer family members are to the Hub (Christ), the closer they are to each other.

Fathers and mothers should look upon their children as younger members of the Lord's family, committed to them to educate for heaven. The lessons that we ourselves learn from Christ we should give to our children, as the young minds can receive them, little by little opening to them the beauty of the principles of heaven. Thus the Christian home becomes a school, where the parents serve as underteachers, while Christ Himself is the chief instructor (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 515).

Bible study on home atmosphere. [*Use Worksheet #4 Family Strengths; Worksheet #5 Christian Family Relationships; Worksheet #6 Family Atmosphere. Divide the seminar participants into 3 small groups. Give each group one of the worksheets. When small group work is completed, debrief in the large group. Note: Participants should be encouraged to maintain appropriate family boundaries when discussing these topics in groups. Participants should share only those personal marriage and family illustrations that are appropriate and which they have permission from others in their families to share.*]

• *Worksheet #4 Family Strengths.* Study the following Bible passages. What family qualities do you find there? What principles are applicable to family life today? How can they be implemented in our homes?

1. Genesis 18:19. Why did God trust Abraham? What qualities of family life were present?
2. Joshua 24:15. What was the commitment Joshua made for himself and his family?

3. 1 John 1:3. How will the lifestyle and the everyday relationship of the parents with Jesus Christ prepare their children for faith in Him?
4. Psalm 127:1. What is the source of family strength according to this verse?

- **Worksheet #5 *Christian Family Relationships*.** Study Colossians 3:12-15. According to these verses, what ten things should characterize relationships in a Christian family? Reflect on how each of the qualities listed interacts with every other. How would you explain the relationship between: Forgiveness and peace? Compassion and kindness? Forbearance and patience?

- **Worksheet #6 *Family Atmosphere*.** What characteristics and qualities related to the atmosphere in the home do you see in the follow Scriptures? What lasting principles can we take away from these biblical insights? What challenges face us as we try to implement these principles in our homes today?

1. Psalm 133:1
2. Proverbs 15:17
3. Proverbs 17:1
4. Proverbs 17:22
5. Proverbs 25:24
6. Mark 3:25

Couple exercise. *[If this seminar is being used with married couples, an additional exercise or an alternative to working in groups would be to assign one or more of the worksheets #4, #5, #6 to the couples. Working together privately as husband and wife, they can specifically address the issues in their marriage and home life. Invite the couples to make an analysis of their marriage and home situation. What strengths are there? What areas are pretty good but could be improved? Talk together with your spouse about things you personally will commit to doing to bring needed changes.]*

Additional key qualities in family togetherness.

- It is important that your home be attractively kept and a pleasant place to live.
- It is important that there be a balance between group spirit and individuality so that each family member can mature as a unique person.
- It is important that a family *enjoy* life together. Family activities and home life should include a lot of laughter, fun and games!

“Let the evenings be spent as happily as possible. Let home be a place where cheerfulness, courtesy, and love exist” (Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health*, p. 100).

Personal/couple exercise. *[These additional “key qualities” could be printed out and distributed, presented on a PowerPoint slide or written on a flip-chart, chalkboard or white board. Give a period of time for personal reflection: As you reflect on your childhood days, which of these elements were present in your family life? How did this affect you as a person? A follow-up to the personal reflection could be a sharing between spouses of the importance of these qualities to their present experience. In which of these areas are they strong? What areas are pretty good but could be improved? Share the things you personally will commit to doing to bring needed changes.]*

Summary

Our homes must be more than places to eat and sleep if they are to fulfill their mission! The basic emotions—the desire to be loved, to be secure, to be needed and to belong—are best nurtured in the relationships of the family and the experience of family togetherness.

References

White, E. G. (1951). *Counsels on health*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

White, E. G. (1952). *The Adventist home*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

White, E. G. (1940). *The desire of ages*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

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Basic Unit of Society

“So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him. Every beast, every creeping thing, every bird, and whatever creeps on the earth, according to their families, went out of the ark.”Genesis 8:18, 19 (NKJV)

Reflect on this Bible passage. What facts concerning families do you see in this verse?

As you think of the wider context of this piece of Scripture—the new beginning after the Flood, what is the importance of Noah’s family in the purposes of God?

What might be the implications for Christian families living in today’s society?

How does the quotation below highlight the strategic significance of the family unit?

The well-being of society, the success of the church, the prosperity of the nation, depend upon home influences” (Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 349).

Time with Each Other

Think about your time with your family last week. How much actual time did you spend with them (do not include mealtimes)?

Record below the approximate amount of time for each day:

1. Sunday _____

2. Monday _____

3. Tuesday _____

4. Wednesday _____

5. Thursday _____

6. Friday _____

7. Sabbath _____

Total time _____

What did this exercise in recording time spent with family mean to you?

What are you most pleased about?

What would you like to change?

How can you make a difference this week?

Social Mobility

Reflect as individuals or family units on your family members' proximity to each other and the effects of this on family togetherness.

1. What impact has social mobility—family movement—had on your family?

2. How has famine, war, economic hardship, illness, persecution, or migration brought change to your family?

3. How do you think this social change in your generation or in previous generations affected you and your children?

4. Given the reality of social mobility, how do you maintain connection?

Family Qualities

Study the following Bible passages. What family qualities do you find there? What principles are applicable to family life today? How can they be implemented in our homes?

1. Genesis 18:19. Why did God trust Abraham? What qualities of family life were present?

2. Joshua 24:15. What was the commitment Joshua made for himself and his family?

3. 1 John 1:3. How will the lifestyle and the everyday relationship of parents with Jesus Christ prepare their children for faith in Him?

4. Psalm 127:1. What is the source of family strength according to this verse?

Christian Family Relationships

Study Colossians 3:12-15. According to these verses, what ten things should characterize relationships in a Christian family? Reflect on how each of the qualities listed interacts with every other.

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

How would you explain the relationship between:

Forgiveness and peace? _____

Compassion and kindness? _____

Forbearance and patience? _____

Family Atmosphere

What characteristics and qualities related to the atmosphere in the home do you see in the following Scriptures? What lasting principles can we take away from these biblical insights? What challenges face us as we try to implement these principles in homes today?

1. Psalm 133:1 _____

2. Proverbs 15:17 _____

3. Proverbs 17:1 _____

4. Proverbs 17:22 _____

5. Proverbs 25:24 _____

6. Mark 3:25 _____