

# *Leading Family Ministries: A Seminar for Local Church Leaders*

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This seminar will be of particular interest to pastors and local church leaders to provide orientation and leadership development on the topic of Family Ministries in the local church. Individuals who have been chosen to serve as leaders of local church Family Ministries or to serve on the Family Ministries committee will also benefit from these materials.

## **Part I: Families are Important**

Family, the basic unit of the community, the society, the nation and the world at large was ordained by God in Eden with the union of Adam and Eve. God designed the family to serve as the primary provision on the human level for the intimate relationships for which the human heart yearns. Family serves as the meeting point for an individual's profound needs for belonging, for love, for intimacy, and for social contact. It is in the family where identity and personal worth are developed. The earliest work in the socialization of an individual also occurs here. Moreover, values that are transmitted from one generation to another are implanted in the young. Most importantly, the family can be a powerful agency for the discipling of its members for Christ.

**Adventist Family Ministries.** The sacredness and uniqueness of the family and, for that matter, the Christian home with its significance in the development of society, church, and nation, calls for a pragmatic strategy to safeguard it. For sustainable family life, specialized ministry is necessary—a ministry like Adventist Family Ministries, that effectively enables people to express genuine love, that penetrates each relationship to open the way for God to reach down and work His miracle of grace, is the obvious option.

The home and family emphasis fostered within the Family Ministries Department endeavors to make the home a discipling center where family members by their relationships with each other are encouraged in their relationship with Jesus Christ and His church. It is “a ministry of grace which acknowledges . . . the biblical teachings relating to the family and holds high God's ideals for family living. . . . Family Ministries focuses on people in relationship” (*Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 2005, p.125).

**Family, the Bible, and family ministries.** Scripture abounds with teaching concerning the family. Study the following Bible passages (See also Handout #1 *Family, the Bible, and Family Ministries*). How does the presence of a Family Ministries Department in a local church help spread the teaching of the Scripture on family living?

- Ephesians 5:21 – 6:4. What spiritual principles and practical guidance for the relationship of husbands, wives, children and domestic helpers in the home are taught in these verses?

• 2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 103:13; Is. 54:5; Jer. 3:14; 31:9, 32; 1 John 3:16; Eph. 4:14, 32; 5:25; Rev. 1:6. How does Scripture present God's relationship with His people as the model of human relationships in marriage and parenting?

• Is. 49:15; Jer. 31:32; Eph. 2:19; Rev. 21:2. What evidence is there in these verses that would help the world gain a revelation of God and His ways from our relationships in our families?

• Malachi 4:5, 6; Luke 15:11-32. Why do you think family reconciliation is given such prominence in the prophecy of last day events of Malachi? How does Jesus' parable of family reconciliation capture the essence of the gospel message to be given to the world in the last days?

**Ellen G. White on the importance of the family.** Affirming the importance of the family, Ellen G. White stated, "Society is composed of families, and is what the heads of families make it. Out of the heart are 'the issues of life'; and the heart of the community, of the church, and of the nation is the household. The well-being of society, the success of the church, the prosperity of the nation, depend upon home influences" (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 349). (See also Handout #2 *Ellen G. White on Importance of Ministry to Families*)

## **Part II: Family Ministries Leadership in the Local Church**

At the local church level, Family Ministries is the responsibility of church leadership, working in conjunction with the Family Ministries Leader(s). In Ghana, both individuals as well as couples (a husband/wife team) could be elected as local church leaders. People elected are those with deep commitment to family relationships who have the desire to learn more about how God's grace can be demonstrated in everyday living in their homes. Those members who have faced traumatic life and family experiences and have grown spiritually through them may be valuable members of such a group or serve as a resource for it.

**Leadership responsibilities.** (See also Handout #3 *Family Ministries Department: Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*). Local church pastors and elected local leadership work closely with the Family Ministries Committee members who assist, offer counsel, and are responsible for developing and implementing the Family Ministry goals of the local church. The leader(s) and committee members share the following responsibilities:

1. Assist church leadership to clarify target groups for family ministry.
2. Assist in assessing the needs of the church members for family life information, education and training, counseling, and enrichment programs.
3. Encourage sensitivity to the needs of families and the impact of church programs upon them in terms of expenditure of time, energy, money, and other family resources.
4. Provide premarital guidance to couples preparing for marriage.
5. Cooperate with the conference/mission Department of Family Ministries to implement the Family Ministries emphasis programs.
6. Cooperate with church leadership in designing, planning, and implementing family life features and programs such as: premarital guidance, strengthening marriage, parent education, family worship, and family finance.

7. Foster a climate of warmth and closeness, engendering a sense of “familiness” in the congregation and a redemptive spirit toward families in need of support and encouragement. (*Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 2005, p.141).

**Approaches to Family Ministries.** The form that Family Ministries takes will be determined by the overall goals of the church, the felt needs of the congregation and the community, and the resources available. Specific approaches to family ministry may be sorted into three broad types or categories: *education*, *enrichment* and *counseling*.

*Education.* Substantial revelation concerning the divine purpose for families has been given. Practical principles for family living regarding the relationships of husbands, wives and children are found in Scripture. Churches can do much to integrate family life education into their regular calendar of prayer and other weekly meetings, Sabbath Schools, divine worship services, in the preaching program, and as members come together for fellowship. Study groups, seminars, workshops, lending libraries, and classes all may be used to educate members in every conceivable area of family life.

*Enrichment.* This process of enhancing family relationships through better communication, deeper understanding, and an improved ability to resolve anger and conflict focuses on the family as a system. Married couples, parents and children or the entire family group make gains together through sharing and interacting in various events and activities. Enrichment programs and activities help singles also, as they have family and relationship needs as well. All are part of a family system somewhere, even if that system is the larger church family. In a day and age when many people do not have extended families nearby, an enrichment group can become a surrogate extended family. When enrichment activity is carried on among individuals who are all part of the same church family, a spirit of community and cooperation is fostered. (Seventh-day Adventist Church, Department of Family Ministries, *Starting a Family Ministries Program*, 2006.)

**Class exercise.** Carefully review Handout #4 *Five Levels of Communication* and Handout #5 *Communication in Our Marriage*. The handout *Five Levels of Communication* is a good example of the *education* methodology, i.e., it conveys cognitive information about communication. *Communication in Our Marriage*, however is an example of an exercise that uses *enrichment* methodology. How do they differ? What are the benefits of each?

*Counseling.* A third approach to family ministries is counseling. Some individuals and families are in such need as to require counseling, a specialized work that is particularly tailored to assist them in resolving short-term or long-term personal or relational crises and difficulties. More trained counselors are needed, and more must be done to inform church members about the availability and appropriateness of individual, marital and family counseling. Where professional counseling is not available, a pastor with some training in this area may be able to provide basic help. We will say more about the specific challenges of counseling in Part IV.

Ultimately Family Ministries is more than completing a checklist of programs, services or special events. While Family Ministries must have some structure, it is the spirit of Family Ministries to seek through each relationship to open the way for God to reach down and work His miracle of grace in every home and church community. Such a ministry is not only programmed

but spontaneous; it manifests itself in loving families and warm, vibrant communities of believers. (See Seventh-day Adventist Church, Department of Family Ministries, *Starting a Family Ministries Program*, 2006.)

The Family Ministries concept has been fully embraced by all local churches in Ghana and local church FM committees have been put in place. Where the Family Ministries departments in the Ghanaian local congregations have functioned effectively, the burden upon the church boards regarding family and marriage issues has been lightened.

### Part III: Planning for Family Ministries Programs

The key to successful family ministry programs in the local church includes the following:

- A definition of needs
- A specific target audience
- Adequate planning
- Quality communication with the target audience
- A small team of church members who are willing to learn some essential relational skills, and
- A keen sense of how this ministry relates to the total church program.

(Seventh-day Adventist Church, Department of Family Ministries, *Starting a Family Ministries Program*, 2006).

**A definition of needs.** Successful programs speak to peoples' needs. Where are people in the congregation and the community feeling their greatest need right now? How many are interested in parenting skills? In grief recovery? In divorce recovery? In improving their marriages? In coping with single life? In strengthening family worship? In friendship and recreation with other Christian families? What kinds of activities would be helpful to them? What are they willing to invest in time, money, and personal involvement?

One way to discover needs is simply to assemble the statistical data already available. Use a questionnaire like *Family Profile Questionnaire* (Handout #6) to gather information from your congregation. You may chart the results of your survey on *Family Profile* (Handout #7). This will give you a family profile of your congregation. You may be able to garner other census data (from the public library, for example) on families in your local community—the number of teenagers, married couples, single parents, divorced persons, widows, etc.

Statistical data cannot, of course, indicate the degree of interest or the “needs” of these people. A survey will help in uncovering the felt needs of both congregation and community. A simple questionnaire like the *Family Life Activities Interest Survey* (Handout #8) can be distributed to active members during a worship service. Inactive church members can be interviewed by telephone or personal visits. The *Community Family Life Education Survey* (Handout #9) can be used for surveying the general public by telephone or door-step visits.

**Group exercise.** Read Handout #10 *The Special Needs of Families*. How can the information from this handout help guide family ministries amid the congregation and community where you live and work?

**Family ministries activities.** With demographic data in hand as well as the surveys of needs and interests, you can now begin to make plans for family ministries activities.

*Church calendar of family ministries activities.* The local church Family Ministries leader(s) and committees cooperate with the local conference/mission Family Ministries Department Director to promote the two special weeks with three Sabbaths that are part of the annual Seventh-day Adventist Church Calendar of Special Days. “Christian Home and Marriage Week” occurs in February; it begins with “Christian Marriage Day” (usually the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sabbath of February) and ends with “Christian Home Day” (usually the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sabbath of February), which emphasizes parenting. “Family Togetherness Week” is promoted in September, with one Sabbath called “Family Fellowship Day,” which emphasizes the church as a family. New resources to support these calendar days in the local church are prepared by General Conference Family Ministries each year. Contact your conference/mission FM Director. (See also Seventh-day Adventist Church, Department of Family Ministries, *Resources for Family Ministries*, 2006.)

*Celebrating family at church.* Without adding new programs to an often already overcrowded church calendar, consider giving a family strengthening emphasis to existing church services, programs and activities. (See Handout #11 *Ideas for Family Ministries*.)

*Specific programs for specific needs.* A formal program is not necessary for every family life need that surfaces in the congregation. Many responses will be informal and may be adequately met through one-to-one contacts or in the normal round of church activity. Carefully planned and presented programs are useful, however, 1) to instruct and inspire, 2) to expose participants to more effective models for relating, and 3) to provide opportunities for relational growth. The local pastor and/or conference/mission FM Director should be consulted by the local church FM leader(s) and committee in selecting presenters for programs.

Programs may be conducted in a wide variety of settings and on different schedules reflecting the needs of the target audience and the particular aims and objectives. Programs for the general church may take the form of an annual family life Sabbath, weekend, or week coinciding with special times in the calendar year such as Mother’s Day, Father’s Day or in the church’s calendar such as Christian Home Week.

Other programs may be multi-generational with families in the church or community as the target audience (or “super families”—made up of biological families joined by other church members for the duration of the program). Family camps provide an excellent setting for multi-generational activities.

Some family life programs will be focused on special topics. They may be single sessions or multi-sessions depending on the content and aims. Parent education classes may be held on an intensive weekend, for instance, or over an extended period, perhaps one night a week for a month or more. In one church the Cradle Roll/Kindergarten mothers met one Sunday morning per month at a Mothers’ Brunch to share and study.

Enrichment-type programs generally require longer periods of time. Marriage strengthening programs, for this reason, usually take a block of time – such as a weekend-to accomplish their goals of relational growth. And, while certain attitudinal changes may occur in a relatively short time, behavioral changes require extended periods. Those kinds of programs, therefore, such as marital care groups, family clustering groups, divorce and grief recovery groups, which have behavioral change as part of their intention, may need continuing sessions for 6 to 12 months or more. (See Seventh-day Adventist Church, Department of Family Ministries, *Starting a Family Ministries Program*, 2006.)

#### **Part IV: The Challenges of Counseling and Outreach**

Local Family Ministries leaders who endeavor to strengthen families in the local church are to be commended for their hard work and dedication. We are discussing in this final session some special challenges they face—counseling and outreach.

**Counseling.** Some individuals and families are in such need as to require counseling. Counseling is a specialized work, particularly tailored to assist individuals resolving personal or relational crises and difficulties. Where sufficient counseling is not provided for these emotionally distressed church members, they tend to look outside the church for help. They may sense a lack of concern for them on the part of their church. While family counseling is not within the job description of local church family ministries leaders and committee members, it is important to encourage members to utilize qualified counselors. Some pastors have appropriate qualifications. In the absence of adequate trained or professional counselors in the church, the Family Ministries department can join with the church leadership (1) to identify qualified counselors in the conference/mission or in nearby communities who could be recommended and (2) to encourage those with the gifts required in counseling to pursue specialized training in this ministry. A dissertation project is now underway in Ghana that is studying an appropriate strategy for equipping pastors in the Ghana Union Conference with counseling tools that will enable greater effectiveness in this area of ministry to members.

Where situations prevail which disallow professional counseling, a pastor or lay person with some training in this area may be able to provide some basic help. Counseling can make exorbitant demands, however, so early assessment of the individual's needs and the time that will likely be required in a given counseling situation is crucial. An awareness of when to refer individuals for more professional help is an important consideration for pastors or lay persons who seek to counsel others.

Special efforts are needed as well to put the financial cost of professional counseling within the reach of all who could benefit from it. Some churches with a strong commitment to providing professional counseling have set aside funding to help those who need but cannot afford professional help. Such funding is anonymously and discreetly distributed by the pastor and/or selected elders.

**Group exercise.** Discuss in small groups the attitude toward counseling in your church. What roadblocks, if any, exist? What can be done to encourage church members to utilize professional counseling?

## Outreach

It is the responsibility of the Family Ministries leader to extend activities beyond the walls of the church. Hence the need for knowing the non-Adventist families living within the community in which the church is situated. The churches are doing extremely well by inviting to church some families on social and special days. As part of the evangelistic thrust, outreach programs should be organized for families in the community whereby meetings would be held in the households. Some community Couples' Night programs and Family Night programs should be organized after series of outreach programs. When by this approach these families realize the positive impact of the church on their homes, families—not individuals only—will be won for the Lord.

**Group exercise.** Distribute Handout #12 *Family Ministries and Outreach*.

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## **Family, the Bible, and Family Ministries**

*Study the following Bible passages. How can the presence of a Family Ministries Department in a local church help spread the teaching of the Scripture on family living?*

- Ephesians 5:21 – 6:4. What spiritual principles and practical guidance for the relationship of husbands, wives, children and domestic helpers in the home are taught in these verses?

- 2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 103:13; Is. 54:5; Jer. 3:14; 31:9, 32; 1 John 3:16; Eph. 4:14, 32; 5:25; Rev. 1:6. How does Scripture present God's relationship with His people as the model of human relationships in marriage and parenting?

- Is. 49:15; Jer. 31:32; Eph. 2:19; Rev. 21:2. What truths are there in these verses that would help the world gain a revelation of God and His ways from our relationships in our families?

- Malachi 4:5, 6; Luke 15:11-32. Why do you think family reconciliation is given such prominence in the prophecy of last day events of Malachi? How does Jesus' parable of family reconciliation capture the essence of the gospel message to be given to the world in the last days?

## Ellen G. White on Importance of Ministry to Families

*Home and family were favorite subjects frequently addressed by Ellen G. White. What do these quotations indicate about the strategic importance of the Christian home? Why, in the light of these quotations, is ministry to families so important?*

“The restoration and uplifting of humanity begins in the home. The work of parents underlies every other. Society is composed of families, and is what the heads of families make it. Out of the heart are the ‘issues of life’ (Proverbs 4:23); and the heart of the community, of the church, and of the nation is the household. The well-being of society, the success of the church, the prosperity of the nation, depend upon home influences” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 349).

“Far more powerful than any sermon that can be preached is the influence of a true home upon human hearts and lives” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 352).

“The greatest evidence of the power of Christianity that can be presented to the world is a well-ordered, well-disciplined family. This will recommend the truth as nothing else can, for it is a living witness of its practical power upon the heart” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 304).

“Our work for Christ is to begin with the family, in the home. . . . By many this home field has been shamefully neglected and it is time that divine resources and remedies were presented, that this state of evil may be corrected” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 429, 430).

“If we will open our hearts and homes to the divine principles of life, we shall become channels for currents of life-giving power. From our homes will flow streams of healing, bringing life, and beauty, and fruitfulness where now are barrenness and dearth” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 355).

## **Family Ministries Department** *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*

The over-arching objective of Family Ministries is to strengthen the family as a discipling center. The family was established by divine creation as the fundamental human institution. It is the primary setting in which values are learned and the capacity for close relationships with God and with other human beings is developed.

Family Ministries is a ministry of grace which acknowledges as normative the biblical teachings relating to the family and holds high God's ideals for family living. At the same time, it brings an understanding of the brokenness experienced by individuals and families in a fallen world. Thus Family Ministries seeks to enable families to stretch toward divine ideals, while at the same time extending the good news of God's saving grace and the promise of growth possible through the indwelling Spirit.

Family Ministries focuses on people in relationship. It is concerned with the needs of married couples, parents and children, the family needs of singles and all members of the wider family circle as they pass through life's predictable stages and contend with unexpected changes in their lives.

Family Ministries reinforces and encourages wholesome families. It helps individuals build and maintain strong family relationships because it recognizes that healthy Christian families make strong members for the kingdom of God and present a winsome witness to the community around them. Family Ministries promotes understanding, acceptance, and love within the family and in the larger family of God and fosters the reconciliation and healing between the generations promised in the Elijah message of Malachi 4:5, 6. It extends hope and support to those who have been injured and hurt by abuse, family dysfunction, and broken relationships. Family Ministries fosters competence in a variety of interpersonal skills needed in relationships. It provides growth opportunities through family life education and enrichment. It encourages individuals, married couples, and families to avail themselves of professional counseling when necessary.

An adequate ministry to families will include: premarital guidance available to all couples before marriage; marriage strengthening opportunities; parent education, with attention given to the special needs of single parents and step-families; instruction in family to family evangelism; and support ministries to help families with special needs.

***The Family Ministries Committee***—To more effectively meet the needs of families in the church, the church board may establish a Family Ministries Committee, chaired by the Family Ministries leader(s). Although this committee should not be too large in order to remain effective, appropriate church leaders should be included as well as persons who understand the varied needs of families within the church. Persons who have faced traumatic life and family experiences and have grown spiritually through them may make valuable contributions as members of the committee. The committee should include both men and women, and where possible, at least one single person, at least one married couple, one or more parents, and a representative cross-section of the various age groups in the church. The duties of the committee shall be the following:

- a. To assist church leadership in compiling family demographic data both within the

church and in the surrounding community to clarify target groups for a ministry to families.

b. To assist church leadership in assessing the needs of church members for family life education, enrichment, and counseling; and in developing a plan for utilizing community and church resources to address these needs.

c. To encourage sensitivity to the impact of church programs on family life in terms of the expenditure of time, energy, money, and other family resources required.

d. To participate with the conference/mission Family Ministries Department in implementing family emphasis programs promoted by the department.

e. To cooperate with church leadership to design, plan, and implement additional family life features and programs as needed, both for family nurture within the membership and evangelistic outreach to the community.

f. To foster a climate of warmth and fellowship, engendering a sense of “familiness” in the congregation and a redemptive spirit toward families in need of support and encouragement.

***Family Ministries Leader(s)***—An individual or married couple may be elected to serve as the Family Ministries leader(s). The individual(s) should have a positive attitude about God, self, others, and the church. The leader(s) should model strong and growing family relationships and exhibit a sincere interest in fostering the well-being of all families. In order to be effective, it is necessary for the Family Ministries leader(s) to have an understanding of God’s redemptive plan for dealing with the brokenness in relationships which sin has brought. It is also important that the leader(s) be able to maintain confidentiality and know when and how to encourage individuals in critical situations to seek professional counseling. The duties of the Family Ministries leader(s) are:

a. To chair the Family Ministries Committee.

b. To represent the needs and interests of families through membership on the church board, and to coordinate Family Ministries plans with the overall church program.

c. To inform the pastor and church board of Family Ministries concerns and achievements, and to encourage funding and support for ministry to families.

d. To identify church and community resources which foster relational growth and provide help to meet critical needs, and to heighten awareness of these resources among church leadership and families.

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## Five Levels of Communication

John Powell (1969) outlines five levels of communication, which can be likened to a person coming out of the forest into a clearing. In the deep recesses of the forest, little about a person is open to view. But as a person moves toward the edge of the forest, more and more light penetrates through the trees, and more and more can be seen. Out of the open spaces of a clearing, the person steps into full view.

### 1. Cliché Level

The first level of communication that Powell speaks of is the cliché level. At this level, the person is still figuratively deep in the forest, sharing in mere chit-chat with another. Couples use trivial talk to enter and exit one another's presence and to "test the waters" as they contemplate deeper levels of communication, to determine whether or not to proceed.

Conversation at this level includes comments like, "How was your day?" "Sure glad it's Friday!" "Aren't those flowers beautiful?" "It's good it rained today; the lawn is so dry!" Little of any personal significance is revealed at this level, but it is useful in a relationship as we move in and out of one another's lives.

### 2. Facts Level

Moving only slightly out of the recesses of the forest of personal privacy, a couple communicating at the facts level reports the news and events of their daily lives to one another. It is at this level of communication that we make one another aware of the information necessary to care for the details of life together as a family and to coordinate everyone's needs.

Conversation at this level runs along these lines: "Joe has a dental appointment right after school tomorrow and will need to be picked up fifteen minutes early." "I will be home late this afternoon because I need to stop at the market." "Jeff got his final examination scores today and he did really well in history." "The chain came off my bicycle and I had to push it home." "The pastor called and the church board meeting has been changed to Monday night."

### 3. Ideas Level

At this level the couple figuratively takes further steps toward the sunlight of the clearing. Here disclosure cautiously moves beyond mere facts to the sharing of ideas. "I prefer the darker color to the lighter one." "I think we should see what books are available at the library before we spend the money to order these." "You could push your bicycle over to Uncle Jim's house and maybe he could help you fix the chain." "Let's plan to do something as a family Monday night since Mom's meeting has been canceled."

### 4. Feeling Level

While the first three levels are important to the smooth running of a household, intimacy cannot be achieved when communication is limited to them. Within these levels, couples may enjoy "meeting minds" and may share considerably at an intellectual level. However, to this point emotions are still carefully guarded. It is at the feeling level that couples really take significant strides toward the light, moving toward intimacy with every step.

At this level, feelings are attached to information. With the disclosure of feelings, couples become increasingly more vulnerable in their relationship, risking personal safety for intimacy.

Someone has said that feelings can be sorted into four main categories: glad, mad, sad, and afraid. Learning to share negative feelings in a constructive manner particularly represents an important step toward intimacy.

### **5. Self-disclosure Level**

It is at this level of communication that intimacy is built. The term *intimacy* is often equated with sexual intercourse. But to claim so narrow a limitation on the term is to cheat it of its fullness. Scripture uses the imagery of “naked and unashamed” to describe the intimacy of marriage in God’s original design. To stand naked and unashamed in a relationship is to risk being fully known so that you might stretch toward fully loving. Nothing is hidden. There is no reason to hide. Each feels safe in the other’s love, able to risk any disclosure because of trust built over time. This is no experience of illusion, however. As Elizabeth Achtemeier (1976) explains it:

In the biblical faith, there is never any illusion that you and I are saints, at least not according to the usual definition of the term. When we share that faith, we therefore do not take with us into marriage unrealistic expectations about what we are like or are apt to do. We are, according to the Christian faith, a unique blend of saint and sinner, capable of the highest and most tender love and equally of the lowest spite and selfishness. Usually both sides of our natures are in full operation at any given time. . . .

If we can acknowledge that in our marital unions, if we know we are both saint and sinner, if we realize that we live by the grace of love, rather than by earned merit and admiration, then we have the freedom to come out from behind our facades and to bare our souls, warts and all. (pp. 136, 137)

Interestingly, however, the Hebrew verb “to know,” is the word used in the Old Testament for sexual intimacy (compare Gen. 4:1; 1 Sam. 1:19). It is the same language used to speak of God’s desired relationship with His people (Ps. 139:1; Jer. 9:3; Hosea 13:4; John 17:3; 1 Cor. 8:3). It is much more than mere knowledge *about* a person. It connotes a profound relationship *with* another. One who *knows* God and is *known* by Him experiences a sense of total acceptance, assurance, and peace. *Knowing* one’s spouse and being *known* provides for the most complete, fulfilling, and at the same time pleasurable and satisfying experience known to humans. Physical intimacy then becomes a “bright thread of joy woven in the ordinary colors of daily life” (Grace and Grace, 1980, p. 81), a celebration of the vitality that surges in us as His creation as male and female, of the experience in knowing intimately--which we pursue together in marriage, and of the joy which is beyond belief as we enter into intimacy with the Giver of every good gift.

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Handout #4 *Five Levels of Communication*

## Communication in Our Marriage

Things about our communication which are very good . . .

Things we find difficult to communicate about but which I wish we could talk about more freely. . .

Things I can do to open and improve communication in our marriage . . .



## Family Profile Questionnaire

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Age group: ✧ 18 - 30 ✧ 31 - 40 ✧ 41 - 50 ✧ 51 - 60 ✧ 61 - 70 ✧ 71+

Gender: ✧ M ✧ F

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (Work) \_\_\_\_\_

Baptized SDA ✧ Yes ✧ No

If Yes, local church membership \_\_\_\_\_

If No, what is your religious background/present affiliation? \_\_\_\_\_

Marital status:

✧ Single, never married                      ✧ Single, divorced                      ✧ Single, widowed

✧ Married - Spouse's name \_\_\_\_\_ Birth date \_\_\_\_\_

✧ Spouse is SDA - Local church membership \_\_\_\_\_

✧ Spouse is not SDA - Present religious affiliation \_\_\_\_\_

Children whose primary residence is with you:

Name	Birth date	Grade in school	School attending	Baptized SDA?	Local church Membership
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Children whose primary residence is elsewhere:

Name	Birth date	Baptized SDA?	Local church membership
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Other family members living with you:

Name	Birth date	Baptized SDA?	Local church membership	Family relationship
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What is the most significant thing the Family Ministries Committee could do this year to address the interests/needs of your family?

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I am interested in Family Ministries and am willing to help by:

- ✧ Telephoning as needed
- ✧ Participating in planning sessions
- ✧ Providing transportation
- ✧ Preparation for events
- ✧ Help with meals/refreshments
- ✧ Child care
- ✧ Advertising
- ✧ Other
- ✧ Presenting lectures/classes/seminars/workshops or other presentations

Your interest area(s): \_\_\_\_\_

**FAMILY PROFILE**

Church: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Category	Active Members		Inactive Members	
	With children under 18	No children under 18	With children under 18	No children under 18
<b>Married, spouse is a member</b>				
Ages 18-30				
Ages 31-40				
Ages 41-50				
Ages 51-60				
Ages 61-70				
Ages 71+				
<b>Married, spouse is not a member</b>				
Ages 18-30				
Ages 31-40				
Ages 41-50				
Ages 51-60				
Ages 61-70				
Ages 71+				
<b>Single, never married</b>				
Ages 18-30				
Ages 31-40				
Ages 41-50				
Ages 51-60				
Ages 61-70				
Ages 71+				

<b>Family Category</b>	<b>Active Members</b>		<b>Inactive Members</b>	
	With children under 18	No children under 18	With children under 18	No children under 18
<b>Single, separated</b>				
Ages 18-30				
Ages 31-40				
Ages 41-50				
Ages 51-60				
Ages 61-70				
Ages 71+				
<b>Single, widowed</b>				
Ages 18-30				
Ages 31-40				
Ages 41-50				
Ages 51-60				
Ages 61-70				
Ages 71+				

<b>Children under 18</b>	<b>Attending</b>	<b>Non-attending</b>
Early childhood (0-5)		
Middle childhood (6-12)		
Adolescence		

## Family Life Activities Interest Survey

Listed below are various family life activities which could be of benefit to the church family. In order to help the Family Ministries Council in planning, please indicate activities which you would like us to feature during the coming year.

Beginning with #1 for the item you desire to have most, rate the activities in order of importance to you from 1 through 20.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Child development and training<br><input type="checkbox"/> Communication<br><input type="checkbox"/> Discussion sessions for adolescents<br><input type="checkbox"/> Effective “in-lawing”<br><input type="checkbox"/> “Empty nesting” (When the children are gone)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Family finances<br><input type="checkbox"/> General family life<br><input type="checkbox"/> Grandparenting<br><input type="checkbox"/> Handling grief, death, dying, other crises<br><input type="checkbox"/> Seminar for single parenting | <input type="checkbox"/> Human Sexuality<br><input type="checkbox"/> Marriage enhancement<br><input type="checkbox"/> Parenting education<br><input type="checkbox"/> Parent-adolescent relationships<br><input type="checkbox"/> Prenatal development and care<br><input type="checkbox"/> Preparation for marriage<br><input type="checkbox"/> Preparation for retirement<br><input type="checkbox"/> Seminar for senior citizens<br><input type="checkbox"/> Seminar for single adults (never married, widows, widower, divorcee)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other: Please give your suggestions below. |
|---|---|
- 
- 

What time of the day and day of the week is best for you to attend a class on family life?  
 (Check those blocks that are *open* for you.)

	Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
Morning	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
Afternoon	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
Evening	___	___	___	___	___	___	___

## Community Family Life Education Survey

1. What do you believe is the number one problem facing families in this community right now?
2. Would you consider attending any of these Family Life Seminars if they were offered in this area? (Select as many as you wish.)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> How to Handle Conflict<br><input type="checkbox"/> Communication in Marriage<br><input type="checkbox"/> Marriage Enrichment or Encounter<br>Weekend<br><input type="checkbox"/> Understanding Children<br><input type="checkbox"/> Self-Esteem<br><input type="checkbox"/> Parenting Skills<br><input type="checkbox"/> Dealing with Teenagers<br><input type="checkbox"/> Childbirth Preparation Class | <input type="checkbox"/> Divorce Recovery<br><input type="checkbox"/> Stress Management<br><input type="checkbox"/> Overcoming Loneliness<br><input type="checkbox"/> Planning Retirement<br><input type="checkbox"/> Family Finances<br><input type="checkbox"/> Grief Recovery<br><input type="checkbox"/> Time Management and Life Priorities<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify below) |
|---|---|
- 
- 

3. What time of the day and what day of the week is best for you to attend a 1 ½ - 2 hr. class on one of the above topics? (Check those time periods blocks that are best for you.)

	Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
Morning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Afternoon	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. It will help strengthen this survey if could obtain the following information about you:

Sex:     M     F

Age: (Please circle the appropriate group.)

17 or under    19-30    31-40    41-50    51-60    60-70    70+

Do you have children under 18 years of age in your home?     Yes     No

Are you:     Never married     Married  
                    Separated                    Divorced  
                    Widowed                        Remarried after divorce

## The Special Needs of Families

### Varied Family Situations

Family ministry seeks to reach every kind of household. The stereotype of the “ideal” family and household—father, mother, children together—is no longer typical. In the United States, for instance, such families now comprise only about one-third of all households. Two out of every five of U.S. households are now headed by single parents. The death of a parent is responsible for some of these homes, divorce and marital separation for many more. Divorce has necessitated custodial arrangements for children. A wide variety of custodial situations exist. Joint custody, in which divorced parents share equal time with their children, is becoming increasingly popular.

The single parent who has never married represents another less prominent family style which is gaining in numbers. As more and more widowed and divorced parents remarry, stepfamilies, with their own unique needs and challenges, increase. Singles, while not considered “family” by dictionary definition, nevertheless have family life needs. These too must be considered.

Family ministry in its widest context is not addressed to any one segment of the church; it includes everyone, for it speaks to universal needs. In a real sense, the church itself constitutes a family. Because of this, family life ministry will be alert to special needs in the whole congregation that require consideration as well.

### Seasons in Family Living

Family ministry must be aware not only of the many and varied forms which the family takes, but also of the fact that people and families pass through various phases in their lives, such as childhood, adolescence, pre-marital, neo-marital, mid- life, retirement, etc. The needs of families will vary, and ministry to families will change according to the particular stage or “season” through which the family is passing.

**Anticipatory ministry.** Much study is currently being given to the phases of life and the periodic change points that individuals and families encounter throughout their lifetimes. Students of these life-cycle stages have identified some built-in, predictable stresses and crises that can and often do occur. Helping a person anticipate and prepare for these potential stresses is what we call “anticipatory ministry.” When we alert people to upcoming, new experiences in their lives, we greatly increase the likelihood that they will make a successful transition.

## Balancing Ideals and Limitations

Ideally, Adventist families should be happy, well-regulated and spiritually strong, with capabilities for coping with the events of life. While we all have much to learn, some families have had more opportunity for growth than others. It is important to remember that it is easy to be too idealistic in our presentations. People who are already carrying enormous burdens of anxiety and guilt regarding their home life may become more discouraged. While we have certain goals in mind toward which we wish our families to progress, we must work with great care, recognizing the importance of unconditional acceptance as a prelude to growth. We must, in other words, grapple with the family as it is as well as how it might be.

Family can be a place of great happiness; it can also be the scene of terrible hurt. Realistic family life ministry must deal with the pain of disappointment, crisis and failure. It must address the complicated struggles that are part of life, while avoiding idealistic solutions that create guilt rather than stimulate growth. The Savior must ever be lifted up as the One who loves people and loves families. He died to redeem them and lives to minister in their behalf. “Satan's work is to discourage the soul. Christ's work is to inspire the heart with faith and hope” (E. G. White, *Mind, Character and Personality*, vol. 1, p. 32).

## A Broad Spectrum of Topics

The following list catalogs the broad issues and topics that typically concern families and family members:

### General

- Self-concept
- Emotions
- Communication
- Conflict resolution
- Decision-making
- Equality
- Sexuality
- Finances
- Mission of the home
- Love
- Forgiveness
- Reconciliation
- Family worship
- Family council
- Recreation
- Stress
- Impact of T.V. and media
- Understanding temperament
- Abuse

### Marriage

- Preparation for marriage
- Neo-marital experience
- Roles
- Headship
- Mutual submission
- In-law relationships
- Marriage enrichment
- Divorce and remarriage

**Parenting**

- Family planning
- Prenatal development and care
- Child development and training
- Adolescent development and behavior
- Parent-child relationships
- Parent-teen relationships
- Working mothers
- Youth and drugs
- Special needs of the one-parent family

**Life and relationships in adulthood**

- Friendships
- Dating
- Selecting a life partner
- Never-married singleness
- Single again--divorce recovery
- Spiritually single (religious division in marriage)
- Coping with the “empty nest”(when children are gone)
- Mid-life concerns and crises
- Adjusting to aging parents
- Preparation for retirement
- Grand-parenting
- Handling grief, death, dying and other crises
- Adjusting to decreasing physical strength and health

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Adapted from Seventh-day Adventist Church, Department of Family Ministries. (2006). *The Special Needs of Families. Starting a Family Ministries Program*. Retrieved October 20, 2009 from [http://www.adventistfamilyministries.org/world/start\\_needs.htm](http://www.adventistfamilyministries.org/world/start_needs.htm).

## Ideas for Family Ministries

### Sabbath School

- Include occasional features in adult, children and youth divisions which deal with specific family themes.
- Invite fathers or mothers as guest speakers with features for junior, earliteen, youth Sabbath Schools on family life themes.
- Have a panel of parents and a panel of youth discuss family issues.
- When teaching the Sabbath School lesson, use family illustrations and make applications to fit family settings.
- Give opportunity for young mothers/parents to study their Sabbath School lesson together in a corner of the room where their children are being taught theirs.
- Give children opportunities to present special music, features or other presentations to the adult Sabbath School.
- Have whole families meet together for song service and a short multigenerational feature before dividing by age group.
- Organize parent support groups arising out of the Sabbath School context, such as a cradle mothers' group.

### Worship Service

- Preach sermons on specific family topics.
- Use examples from different family living situations as sermon illustrations. Listeners identify with the human interest aspect and receive encouragement to grow even if not all such illustrations have successful endings.
- Provide a "Children's Corner" during the worship service with children's stories or other features tailored especially for the young. Include points which can be discussed at home.
- Prepare a children's activity sheet or a special children's church bulletin which draws young people into the various aspects of the worship service.
- Take into account the needs of children, adults, singles and marrieds when planning the worship service and selecting music.
- Have couples or families lead various aspects of the worship-providing special music, reading scripture, announcing hymns or praying.
- Involve youth in leading congregational worship or serving as ushers or greeters.
- Insert a time of fellowship at the beginning of the worship service when worshippers may greet one another.
- Provide opportunity for members to give ideas and suggestions of sermon topics and other aspects of the service which could have a more positive effect on marriage and family living.
- Include a bulletin insert with special thoughts from Bible and Spirit of Prophecy on family living.
- Distribute a handout at the close of the sermon with practical ways the message of the morning can be put into practice at home.
- Throughout the church year acknowledge and affirm the various kinds of families—newlyweds, couples with small children, families with teenagers, couples in mid-life, single parents, divorced persons, step families, multigenerational families, widows and widowers, and singles who have never been married.

- Provide child-care from time to time for single parents so that they can enjoy the full blessing of the worship service.
- Build into the yearly worship program appropriate emphasis on the secular and church calendars of special days such as Mother's Day, Father's Day, Christian Home Day, Christian Marriage Day, Family Fellowship Day.
- Use responsive readings on the family from the hymnal or use other appropriate scripture passages.
- Have a special time of commitment for couples/families at the close of the worship service.

### **Prayer Meeting or Mid-week Service**

- Study biblical marriage and family themes, i.e., marriage covenant, love, forgiveness, mutual submission, fruits of the Spirit in the home, using spiritual gifts in the family, family worship.
- Study accounts of Bible fathers, mothers, children or whole families.
- Select for study "family" portions of Spirit of Prophecy books such as *The Ministry of Healing*, *Education* or entire books such as *The Adventist Home*.
- Pray for specific church families by rotation.
- Invite testimonies of God's blessing in family living.
- If families with children do not regularly attend, plan a monthly mid-week family night with spiritual activities and features of interest to children and youth, perhaps beginning with supper together.
- Have a family worship demonstration as part of the mid-week service, with selected families demonstrating interesting and effective family worship ideas.
- Sing the special hymns for families from our hymn books.
- Feature a series on one of the family topics that is of high interest to the congregation and show how the Bible is practical to every day family living.

### **Adventist Youth Meetings**

- Plan programs around topics of interest to youth regarding family living, building relationships/friendships, communication with parents, handling and resolving conflict, dating, preparing for marriage, etc.
- Have Pathfinders or other AJY groups earn the honor in Family Life.
- Plan some family-oriented events periodically at Pathfinder and other AY meetings such as socials or outings-camping, hiking.
- Have a panel discussion with two panels—one of teens and one of parents. Let them ask each other "What I've wanted to know but never dared to ask. . ." questions.
- Have a Pathfinder open house when parents are invited to see what the young people are doing.
- Invite parents to help on a short term basis, to teach a craft, a progressive classwork component, or an honor.

### **Meetings With Church Board and Councils**

- At one of the regular meetings, plan a brain-storming session for the Church Board and/or Church Ministries Coordinating Committee (or the Sabbath School Council, the Youth Ministries Council, the Personal Ministries Council, the Board of Elders, etc.).

Assign this question: “How can the various departments of our church can strengthen families.” Make specific plans to implement ideas and suggestions that arise.

- Plan a few minutes periodically for in-service education of council members. Study topics such as communication, temperaments, self-worth, conflict resolution which will improve the quality of church family life and spill over to individual families.
- Provide opportunities for families of board/council members to fellowship together to build better bonds and feelings of “family” among leaders.

### **Church Social Meetings**

- Focus different programs throughout the year on various aspects of family living—marriage, mothering, fathering, grandparenting, and include programs that focus on family clustering groups (which might include all church members divided into “super families”).
- Build church social programs around family holidays in the calendar such as Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, Valentine’s Day.
- Plan a round-robin social that moves among several homes with each family responsible for one game or activity and end up at the church for refreshments.
- Select films, videos and other programs carefully so as to convey and deepen Adventist family values.
- Sponsor a “Family Talent Night” with various families in the churches presenting the combined or separate talents of parents and children.
- Create a place mat for Sabbath potluck with activities and puzzles that will get the church family communicating multigenerationally.

### **Evangelistic Meetings**

- Present doctrinal messages around family themes such as the fatherhood of God, making our earthly homes a foretaste of our heavenly home, being faithful to our family promises and covenants as God has been faithful to His eternal covenant with us, presenting the Sabbath as a time for rest and renewal of relationships between God and ourselves and between family members, and family finance and Christian stewardship.
- Include talks on family life as a part of evangelistic meetings.
- Feature families during meetings (see above on the Worship service). Let families or couples present special music or give personal testimonies.
- Give special Bible studies on family living to candidates.
- Distribute handouts and literature on family life to evangelistic congregations.
- Plan some visitation time for families as wholes as well as visiting individuals within families. Endeavor to work for the family as a unit.
- Organize visitation using several from a family as a visitation team.

### **Communion Services**

- Designate a special place for couples and/or families who wish to share the ordinance of footwashing together.
- Explain to families with unbaptized children how to teach their children the meaning of the communion service.
- Plan a special time when children with their parents may sit together with unconsecrated emblems and sample them for the purpose of instructing their curious and inquiring minds.

- As children grow older, let fathers wash the feet of their sons and mothers the feet of their daughters to teach them and to give them a sense of specialness and inclusion in the service.
- Have a simulated passover meal as families before the communion, explaining the symbols and the meaning to the Hebrew family and the new understanding brought by Christ to the Communion.

### **Baptismal Services**

- Celebrate the candidate's membership in his/her own family as well as membership in the church family.
- Include the entire family in the preparation of a child for baptism, providing opportunity for parents to recommit themselves, siblings to look back or forward to their own decision as well as making sure the child to be baptized understands the step he is about to take.
- Give family members opportunities to share feelings about their loved one's baptism by song or personal testimony.
- When young people are baptized, meet with the family to pray and share ways in which all can be supportive of the newly baptized young person.
- Include a "welcome to the family" by giving each member some special paper as stationery on which to write words of encouragement and welcome to be part of a scrapbook keepsake for the new member.
- Where possible, baptize members of the same family together. Some find a special sense of unity in being baptized simultaneously.
- Encourage baptismal candidates to invite their extended family members to be present. Recognize the potential of this event to give renewal and stimulation to family relationships.
- Encourage families to remember and commemorate baptismal dates of family members at home.
- Remember in a special way at church the anniversaries of current members' baptisms.

### **Child Dedication Services**

- This is an occasion which naturally generates warm feelings of familyness throughout the congregation. It affords an excellent opportunity for a special message about the importance of a family, child-rearing, parenting, etc., in the sermon or in a special feature.
- Make the dedication service special with an appropriate charge and words of encouragement to the parents.
- Offer family members (siblings, parents, grandparents) the opportunity to share with the church family their joyful feelings over the presence of this little one among them.
- Record the dedication services and give the tape to the family. They will be able to remember and celebrate this event annually.
- Give the parents and child a special gift book (Child Guidance, The Adventist Home, or some other appropriate title).
- Prepare a special message for this dedicated child which he will later read (at age 11 or 12) which will encourage him to prepare for baptism.
- Give the family a folder which shows all the church has to offer in assistance to the parents and to their child as he/she grows.

- Make it a whole family event by including extended family as available in the dedication event.
- Make a scrapbook of photographs, the church bulletin of the day, dedication certificate, etc, that can be added to on the occasion of other significant events in the child's life.

### **Wedding Services**

- Encourage the bride and groom to think of their family when planning their wedding. Perhaps they can include special words or thoughts of tribute to parents or other family members during the ceremony or at their reception.
- Provide engaged couples with premarital guidance, helping them to identify issues which they need to discuss and to develop the skills with which to manage their relationship successfully.
- Select and train one or two couples who enjoy being married to meet with the engaged pair to talk about what marriage means to them.
- Build wedding sermonettes around scriptural passages about marriage with practical application for the new couple.
- Recognize the potential of a wedding to be a time of togetherness and renewal for each of the families concerned. Encourage them to invite family members to this event.

### **Funeral Services**

- Be sensitive to the special needs of the grieving family, anticipating their immediate and continuing physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs and providing for them in their time of loss.
- In preparing and delivering the various parts of funeral services, highlight those aspects of warmth and humanness in family living which characterized the deceased, giving relatives the opportunity to relive the treasured moments of family life together.

### **Vacation Bible School**

- Build the VBS theme around the topic "Family."
- Include family living features to help children learn how to live successfully in their families.
- Involve families of children in VBS graduation ceremonies. Give opportunity for church families to mingle with non-church families over a fruit drink or during a graduation dinner or banquet.
- Conduct VBS in the evening conjointly with a family life program for parents.
- Where possible, consider using father-mother or grandfather-grandmother leader/teacher teams in VBS for the modeling effect it will have upon the children.
- Have a "parent" component so the whole family attends together.

### **Church Campouts**

- Emphasize family strengthening at church retreats or family camps. Include special programs of Bible studies, nature studies, or social activities (games, recreation) which give parents and their children/youth opportunity to interact with each other.

### **Church Newsletters, Bulletins and Bulletin Boards**

- Share encouraging news from the various families within the membership.
- Include articles, columns and features on family topics.

- Post items on bulletin boards which encourage families.

**Church Library**

- Build a family life lending library which includes books, periodicals, audio and video cassettes, and possibly even films.
- Feature a family life book/cassette-of-the-month. Give a promotional preview and encourage families to read/listen to the specially selected library item.
- Encourage members to read/listen to a selected book/tape by passing copies through the church using an attached routing list of names.

**Lay Activities/Personal Ministries**

- Encourage families to work together as teams for missionary activity. As parents join with their children to distribute literature, to ingather, to visit new interests, or shut-ins at home, there is a double blessing, upon themselves and upon those they visit.

**Pastoral Visitation**

- Pastors and local elders who visit with members in their homes, can be alert to individual family needs and opportunities created by significant family events such as weddings, births, baptisms, funerals and other life crises. During the visit, minister to the needs generated by these circumstances. Put members in touch with people, programs or resources which they can utilize.
- Make arrangements to visit families at worship time through the week or on Friday or Sabbath evening. Offer to lead the family in family worship, sharing creative ideas and suggestions to encourage them in this daily experience.

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## **Family Ministries and Outreach**

The great invitation we have to extend to others is to a place in the family of God. What better way to begin than with entry events (which may merge into pathways) that speak to family needs and provide non-members with an opportunity to become more acquainted with the church, its message, and its people. Bridges between the needs of families and the sharing of the gospel are too natural to be left unbuilt. Here are a few ideas:

### **Seminars on Topics of Community Interest**

- Family finance
- Family stress management
- Caring for your aging parents
- Vacation Bible School
- You and your child (parenting classes perhaps associated with VBS)
- You and your teen
- Family health (This may take the form of fun runs, aerobics, etc., that whole families can participate in together.)
- Family nutrition
- Temperament testing
- Singles enrichment
- Marriage enrichment
- Video series on family issues

### **Accenting “Family” Aspects of Calendar Holidays**

- Mother’s/Father’s Day services (Poll the community for outstanding parents and honor them.)
- A family for the holidays (Match lonely people in the community with caring church families willing to share their holiday celebrations with them.)

### **Programs/Support Groups for Family Transitions**

- Prenatal classes
- In-laws
- Newlyweds
- Preparing for marriage
- Making the most of retirement
- Your family and your handicapped child
- Stress management for teens
- Coping with loss and grief
- Parents’ support group for chemically dependent youth
- Making it through mid-life
- Coping with divorce
- Helping children cope with divorce
- Meeting the challenge of single parenting

### **Acknowledging Special Family Events**

“When a baby is born, couples begin having 'sober thoughts of mothering and fathering, doctoring and proctoring, education and, for adults who do not belong to a religious institution, religion” (*New York Times*).

A family ministries outreach to parents with newborns might be the assembly of materials in an attractive folder which could include items such as:

- An introductory subscription to a missionary magazine.
- A Bible Course enrollment card or first lesson of an actual study guide series.
- A description of a Cradle Roll program at the local S.D.A. church with an invitation to attend.
- A coupon for a gift copy of a children's book such as *My Bible Friends*.
- A sample copy of *Our Little Friend*, the tiny tot's Sabbath School paper.
- An invitation to any parenting programs, nutrition classes, VBS programs, marriage or family enrichment programs, etc. being offered by the local church.
- An appropriate letter from the pastor giving congratulations on the arrival of their new baby.

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