

FAMILY MINISTRY

What can we do as Christian parents to put our children in the best position to exercise faith in the person and work of Christ and be saved (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)?

“Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! (5) You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (6) These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. (7) You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. (8) You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. (9) You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

Family is God’s plan for both keeping faith alive in the current generation and passing faith to the next. Family is the key mechanism for spiritual formation in children and is a key maturing mechanism for us as adults.

What is Family Ministry ?

It is not a set of programs, but a process (or methodology) in which the church intentionally shapes and forms the family regardless of the content of programs.

The call to Family Ministry is a call to buttress the walls of homes in the community with the strengths that provide stability for all in the family. It is a radical remodeling of our homes from the heart out and it is in and through these broken and dysfunctional families that God can and will restore our foundation.

The vision of family ministry in the church is to forge a balanced partnership between the church (equipper, encourager, and educator) and the Christian home (teaching, training, and toiling) so that the one true faith is firmly founded in our lives as we love God and our neighbour across all generations.

- Ministering to families by building up, equipping and encouraging them.
- Building upon the strengths that families have and instilling the strengths and characteristics that families need.
- Should encompass everyone in the congregation because everyone belongs to a family and should be conformed to the likeness of Christ.

Family Ministries



MATERIALS & RESOURCES

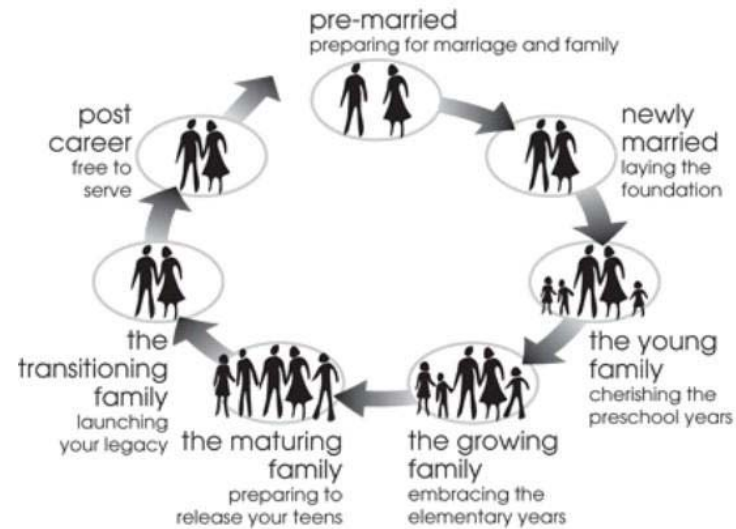
“I reckon if we think of marriage and family as critical institutions in our society, then we have to provide sufficient resources to support these institutions.” Professor Tan Ern Ser (NUS)

ABSTRACT

This little booklet seeks to give the materials and resources available in the market for each Stage of the family life cycle. It is not exhaustive.

Board of CE

family life cycle



If the Church focuses on building up believers in their walk with God, they in turn can develop strong families wherein the parents nurture their children in the ways of the Lord. Here are some resources to help you encourage families to do that. The resources are lined up according to the different stages of a family life.

STAGE : PRE-MARRIED

Definition :

Unmarried, not divorced or widowed, no children and age 39 or less. This group includes all not-yet married (pre-engaged or engaged stages and not yet a parent). This is usually a dating or courting phase muddled by the customs and norms of present culture which often clash with their faith journey. Pre-marital instructions is often to reconnect with the church

Objective :

- Important premarital instructions and training
- Introducing the to-be married couple to a mentor couple (a matured couple who have been married for at least 10 years) who will walk alongside with them and do it with them

Curriculum :

- Before You say "I Do" (Wes Roberts & H. Norman Wright)
- Prepare / Enrich (Focus on the Family) – to be done with "Before You Say I Do"
- SmartStart (Focus on the Family)
- Preparing for marriage (David Boehl)
- **Those exploring marriage / relationships**
 - "Becoming A Friend and Lover" (Guide book / workbook) by Dick Purnell
 - "Finding Your Million Dollar Mate" (Randy Pope)
 - "Too Close too soon : Avoiding the Heartache of Premature Intimacy" (Dr Jim A Talley & Dr Bobby Reed) – with study guide at the end of book.

STAGE : NEWLY - MARRIED

Definition :

Married 9 years or less, no children

This season surrounds the first five years of marriage without children. For family life cycle purposes, this season includes those married 9 years or less, without the presence of children.

This is the critical transitional phase for every marriage and future family. Statistically, more marriages rupture in this season than any other. The relational habits and disciplines that have been formed will significantly influence the quality of one's marriage later in life. While marriage mentors are desired, commitment to the mentoring process will vary greatly.

Objective :

- to develop good relational habits and disciplines that could strengthen the marriage; to get rid of bad habits/sins that could undermine/destroy the marriage; to achieve mutual understanding and agreement on various issues that may affect marriage e.g communication, marriage time, sex, finance, preparation for parenthood, dealing with extended families, work, household chores etc.
- Laying a strong foundation for marriage
- A good preparation for family

Curriculum :

- Couple Check-up (Focus on the Family)
- The Marriage Course (Relationship Central)
- A Weekend to Remember (Family Life)
- Marriage Enrichment (Focus on the Family)
- I Still Do (Family Life)

STAGE : THE YOUNG FAMILY

Definition :

Married, oldest child is 0-5.

This season is marked with the presence of pre-school children. This life cycle stage begins with the birth (or adoption) of the first child and last until he or she is about 5 years old. The new parents must acquire parenting skills that will determine the tone of the family relationships for the duration of the family's existence. And if a husband and wife are not careful, they may drift apart. While a church may encourage parents to become faith trainers at home – the parent seek the church to do all the heavy-lifting. A 'special-needs' child heightens the couple's drift toward isolation.

Objective :

- Parents to be equipped with parenting skills
- Couples to enrich their marriage
- Cherishing the pre-school years

Curriculum

- The Family Project (Focus on the Family)
- The Parenting Course (Relationship Central)
- The Marriage Course (Relationship Central)
- A Weekend to Remember (Family Life)
- Marriage Enrichment (Focus on the Family)
- Family Time Training - for faith formation in the children

STAGE : THE GROWING FAMILY

Definition :

Married, oldest child is 6-9, or 10 – 12.

This season is a relatively placid period for the family, when children are between the ages of 6 and 12. A primary parenting task is to prepare children for the coming challenges of puberty and adolescence. The wise couple continues to refresh their intimacy and clarifies values that may be tested by the children in the upcoming teenage years. This season is not placid for the growing step family, but instead a season of much turmoil that is centered around conflicting values surrounding the co-parenting tasks.

Objective :

- Parents to be equipped with parenting skills
- Couples to enrich their marriage
- Embracing the elementary years

Curriculum

- Preparing for Adolescence : How to survive the coming years of change (James Dobson)
- Bring up Boys / Girls (James Dobson)
- The Parenting Course (Relationship Central)
- The Family Project (Focus on the Family)
- Parenting : A Roller Coaster Experience (Focus on the Family)
- A Weekend to Remember (FamilyLife)
- Marriage Enrichment (Focus on the Family)
- Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage (Mark Gungor)
- Family Time Training
- Love Them Discipline Them (Betty N Chase)

STAGE : THE MATURING FAMILY

Definition :

Married, oldest child is 13 to 18.

Much of the family's attention during this stage revolves around the increasing activity and independence of teenage children. Parenting responsibilities gradually move from controller to coach. The family spends less time together at home. Schedules are hectic. Parents will find it increasingly difficult to have time alone because children stay up later and have needs that are often time-consuming and demanding.

Objective :

- Equip parents to parent / coach their teenagers
- Preparing parents to release their teens

Curriculum :

- The Parenting Teenagers Course (Relationship Central)
- The Family Project (Focus on the Family)
- Parenting : A Roller Coaster Experience (Focus on the Family)
- No Apologies Course (Focus on the Family)
- Marriage Course (Relationship Central)
- Bringing Up Boys / Girls
- A weekend to Remember
- Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage (Mark Gungor)
- Loving your teen (Focus on the Family)

STAGE : THE TRANSITIONING FAMILY

Definition :

Married, youngest child is 19+, and couple not retired

This season is marked by the departure of the first of the children, with one or both of parents still employed. This can be a challenging time for the marriage as the couple now shifts attention back to each other. Parenting is not complete as the children are often still dependent financially and emotionally. Usually one or more of the children marry during this stage and the parents must release them to 'leave-and-leave' to their own spouse. The first grandchild may arrive in this stage. Energy and health are also transitioning – with care of aging parents sometimes added to the mix. For many, life seems to have been turned upside-down with many silently desiring to 'get their old life back'.

Objective :

- Launching your legacy

Curriculum :

- The Second Half of Marriage (David & Claudia Arp) – Workbook & Video
- Marriage Enrichment (Focus on the Family)
- A Weekend to Remember (FamilyLife)
- Marriage Course (Relationship Central)
- Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage (Mark Gungor)

STAGE : POST CAREER

Definition :

Married, youngest child is 19+, and couple is retired

This season should be called XYZ- Extra Years of zest with the primary focus shifting to grandchildren with grandparents now having the opportunity to help shape yet another generation to love and follow Christ. For many, the hope is that their adult children will assume a greater role in caring for their aging parents. All too often, this season reveals the quiet back stories of unresolved family conflicts.

Objective :

- To navigate unresolved issues and unfinished business
- To rediscover God's call on the second half of their life
- Spiritual formation and spiritual practices

Curriculum :

- A Season of Mystery : 10 Spiritual Practices for Embracing a Happier Second Half of Life (Paula Huston)
- A Vision for the Aging Church : Renewing Ministry for and By Seniors (James Houston & Michael Parker)
- Aging : The fulfillment of Life (Henri Nouwen & Walter J. Gaffrey)
- Half Time (Bobby Buford)
- Marriage Enrichment (Focus on the Family)
- A Weekend to Remember (FamilyLife)

SPECIAL GROUPS

Single Parent

This group is made of those unmarried, and the parent of a child with the youngest under the age of 19. This is an especially complicated phased muddled by the primary relationship with one's child (ren) while at the same time desiring dating and courting to lead to marriage. Pre-marital instructions is often desired to sort through forming a step family.

Single Adult

Unmarried, not divorced or widowed.

Never married, not a parent, and under the age of 40

This season is often one of unfulfilled hopes and dreams as well as a time of elusive life connections. Work and career fill many of a week's hours but the open spots in the week become more increasingly difficult to fill. While the role of aunt or uncle may keep the family connections going – the “hecticity” of peer's lives complicates growing relationships.

Childless couple

Married 10 years or more, no children

This season shares some of the awkwardness of the single adult within the local church. While married, their lives are not organized and structured around the activities of their children. The conversations of medical interventions or adoption might also have passed. Many serve and care for other people's children within the church's children or youth ministries – but most do not. And as no transition followed, the couple has much to figure out on their own.

Unmarried, divorced or widowed

The ruptured dream

The trauma of the loss of a spouse to death or the loss of a dream to divorce is all-encompassing. The sense of being “whole” has been replaced with an ever-present knowledge of new ‘holes’ draining all at once struggled to hold together. And then there is the trauma experienced by the children who may or may not yet be able to ascribe any meaning to the losses suddenly experienced in their young lives. Who can I turn to? Where will my help come from? Deep spiritual questions amidst the upheaval of even the most mundane activities of life.

Grandparents

- The power of a Godly grandparent – leaving a spiritual legacy by Stephen & Janet Bly

OTHER RESOURCES

- Focus on the Family
 - The Marriage Moments (Devotion)
 - The Marriage Series

- Stormie Omatian
 - The Power of Praying Husband
 - The power of Praying Wife
- Family Altar Devotions (Dr Herbert Tan)
- Setting Your Marriage Free (Freedom in Christ)
- ParentLife Magazine (LifeWay)
- The Creative Parenting Series by Josh McDowell (Videos can be found on YouTube)
- HomeBuilders' Series – Marriage & Parenting
- Sex Education – Concordia Series
- Birds & the Bees – SSMC (Dr Ng Kok Moi)
- Understanding & Mentoring Teenagers – Board of Youth Work
- Life on the Edge – Preparing for the Challenges of adulthood – James Dobson / Bob Hostetler
- Movies
 - Fireproof
 - Courageous
 - Facing the Giants
 - Mr Holland's Opus
 - I Not Stupid I & 2
 - Undaunted – The Early Life of Josh McDowell

May God give us the grace to love Him and His word supremely, so that we might place our children in the best position to exercise faith in the person and work of Christ and be saved.