



 FamilyLife®

# Building Strong Marriages in Your Church

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GLOBAL TRAINING MANUAL





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## **Building Strong Marriages in Your Church**

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# OVERVIEW OF BUILDING STRONG MARRIAGES IN YOUR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

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*“If we reach the family, we reach the world for Christ.”* –BILL BRIGHT,  
Founder of Campus Crusade for  
Christ International (Cru)

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## THE PURPOSE OF THIS TRAINING

The purpose of this training manual is to help pastors and spiritual leaders in every country of the world launch and grow a lay-led ministry to families in their churches and communities. A strong family ministry helps couples grow in their relationship with God and encourages families to become strong foundations in their church, community, and country.

1. Session one gives an overview of the entire training and introduces FamilyLife.
2. Session two describes the family in crisis and calls for the urgent need to minister to families.
3. Session three helps pastors and their wives understand the importance of their own marriage in the context of ministry to others.
4. Session four helps the pastor and lay-leader couples form a Family Ministry Team.

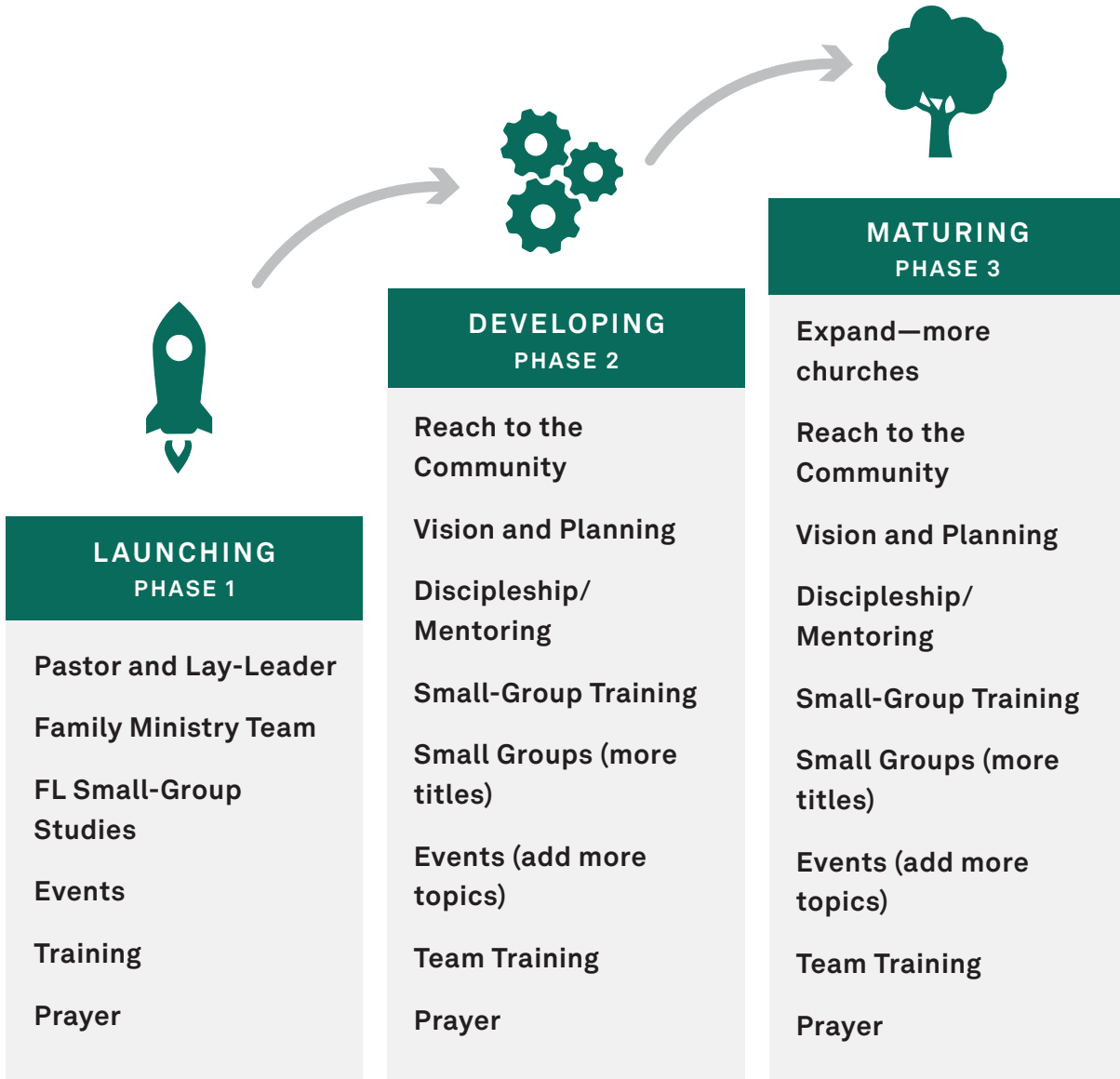


## PARTICIPANT OBJECTIVES

- Describe the overall purpose of this training.
  - Describe background information about Cru and FamilyLife.
  - Describe how your marriage is the foundation for ministry effectiveness.
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- 5. Session five is an orientation to the FamilyLife small-group studies.
- 6. Session six describes the role of events in growing a ministry to families.
- 7. Session seven provides the strategy for launching and growing a ministry to families.

There are three phases of growing a ministry to families in churches:





Here's what we expect participants will do after completing this training:

- Launch or expand a family ministry in their church
- Launch small groups
- Lead or participate in a small group
- Lead or participate in a Family Ministry Team

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## **A NOTE ON MINISTRY AS A SINGLE**

We encourage couples to do marriage and family ministry together because it provides a visible demonstration of the power of teamwork in marriage. However, we realize that some individuals (married or single) may choose to develop a ministry to families on their own. If this applies to you, we affirm and appreciate your contribution to the Kingdom of God. Although our training manuals are worded to address couples who are doing ministry together, please adapt and apply the material to fit your situation.

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## **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF CCCI AND FAMILYLIFE**

This section gives an overview of FamilyLife and its parent organization, Campus Crusade for Christ International, or CCCI (known as Cru in the US).

### **1. CCCI Mission Statement**

CCCI's mission statement is "Win, build, and send Christ-centered, multiplying disciples."

CCCI is an interdenominational ministry committed to presenting the gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations. We cooperate with millions of Christians from many denominations and hundreds of Christian organizations around the world to help Christians grow in their faith and share the gospel message with fellow countrymen. Since 1951, God has used CCCI to reach millions of people with the gospel. CCCI and FamilyLife want to "build movements everywhere so that everyone knows someone who truly follows Jesus."

What is CCCI/Cru? Visit [www.cru.org](http://www.cru.org).

## 2. The Launch of FamilyLife

Strong marriage and family life has been a core value of CCCI from its beginning. Staff surveys of the mid '70s and anecdotal evidence revealed a serious decline in the health and well-being of family life, so the leaders of CCCI worked to develop resources to address this issue. They also developed resources for pre-married couples. The result was a weekend marriage conference for engaged staff couples. The first conference was held in California, attended by 43 people.

In its early days the ministry effort was focused solely on serving the staff of CCCI to address their significant family needs. But it only took a couple years for word to get out that the weekends were life changing. Once again the marriages and families of CCCI were flourishing. Staff members told their story to ministry partners, pastors, and friends everywhere. As a result, the Weekend to Remember® conference was offered to the public in cities across the US and Canada.

The need for follow-up resources after the Weekend to Remember gave birth to the FamilyLife AOM Connect® series (formerly called HomeBuilders®). Other marriage and family resources were also produced. The daily radio program, FamilyLife Today®, and the website, [www.familylife.com](http://www.familylife.com), were launched.

The needs and challenges of family life are universal, so now the ministry has spread to nations around the world. The international ministry of FamilyLife was launched in September 1992. What was first available in the US is now available worldwide.

### 3. FamilyLife Mission Statement

FamilyLife’s mission statement is “To effectively develop godly marriages and families who change the world one home at a time.”

### 4. FamilyLife Vision

FamilyLife’s vision is “Every home a godly home.”

### 5. What does FamilyLife Believe?

- a. We affirm the CCCI Doctrinal Statement, and we consider the following values as presuppositions to our core values. They should be common to all healthy Christian lives.

We embrace each of these wholeheartedly as foundational elements of kingdom life:

- Authority of Scripture **2 Timothy 3:15–17**
- Evangelistically Oriented **Colossians 1:28–29**
- Holy Spirit Filled and Guided **Ephesians 5:18–21**
- Importance of the Local Church **Matthew 16:18**
- Necessity of Prayer **Philippians 4:6–7**

- b. With the Scriptures as our authority, FamilyLife’s Foundational Principles also affirm our core beliefs and are a guide for products and ministries. The list of principles is an excellent source document that provides biblical references for a model for marriages and families. We encourage pastors and teachers to use this resource as a starting point for sermons or other presentations.

### 6. Your Marriage is the Foundation

The basic premise of this training is that your own marriage is the foundation for ministry effectiveness. We believe that in every ministry endeavor—as a pastor couple or a lay-leader couple—your own marriage is of primary importance to the overall effectiveness in what you are doing to minister to others.



**Key Principle 1.1:** This process of growth begins with your own marriage first.

**Mini Activity:** Spend one to two minutes in quiet meditation and ask this question: *Am I open to God working in my marriage as the first step in building a foundation for any ministry effort?*

The single most important testimony that will encourage others to consider God's principles for marriage is your own testimony of how God has changed your life and your marriage. As other couples hear your story and see your example of applying biblical principles in your marriage, they will be drawn to getting involved also. Then as they experience God's power in changing their own lives and their own marriages, they will readily consider joining with you in building a family ministry in your church that can reach out to hundreds and thousands of other couples.

So back to the main point: Your own marriage is the foundation for ministry effectiveness, and when you personally experience God's hand of change, hope, and encouragement, that experience will generate a personal passion and a vision to reach out to other couples.



**Key Principle 1.2:** Your own marriage is the foundation for ministry effectiveness.

## 7. The benefits of a family ministry in your church:

There are many benefits to launching and expanding a family ministry in your church and community. Here are some of the benefits:

- a. Opens opportunities to touch lives in every segment of society.
- b. Uses the universal needs of marriages and families as an entry to minister deeply, drawing couples to Jesus and instilling a biblical mindset to experience a fulfilling, dynamic marriage.
- c. Encourages husbands and wives to grow spiritually together rather than attending separate Bible studies, thus encouraging oneness and cutting down on separate time commitments away from home.
- d. Gives couples the opportunity to minister as a team, thereby raising marriage to a level where God gives them an eternal task to complete together.

- e. Provides great opportunities to grow the size of your church. Couples are eager to engage in small-group studies and attend events that touch a felt need in their lives (issues of marriage and family).
- f. Helps people see their need for the Lordship of Jesus in their personal lives as a fundamental step to having a successful marriage.
- g. Calls pastors and lay-leaders to make their marriages a priority—even above their ministry responsibilities. This first-place priority helps these couples move toward oneness and defeat isolation in the midst of ministry activities.

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## SUMMARY

FamilyLife has a vision to partner with pastors and lay-leader couples to equip them to launch and expand a family ministry in their churches. The first step to building a family ministry and the essential foundation for ministry effectiveness is your own marriage.



### KEY PRINCIPLES:

- The process of growth begins with your own marriage first.
  - Your own marriage is the foundation for ministry effectiveness.
-

# Activity

## Expectations for this Training

(10 minutes)

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### LEADER NOTES:

**Materials needed:** Colored Paper (bright-colored paper; 3-4 sheets per person; 10mm x 20mm. Use additional sheets if necessary); Masking Tape; Markers (large, dark colors; one per person)

**Grouping:** Participants will work individually.

**Instructions:** This activity should be completed prior to presenting the second session and after the overall objectives for the training have been covered.

**Before activity:** Hand out paper and markers.

**After activity:** Collect the sheets and tape them to a wall during a break, where they can remain during the entire training event. Group sheets by similarities. Look for repetition, common themes, etc.

Refer to this Expectation Wall when the second session begins. Also, periodically refer to the expectations as the training progresses. The idea is to connect the expectations of the participants to the content of the manual.

Refer to the Expectation Wall during the last session as you wrap up the training. The sheets of paper can be moved to another location if the group plans to gather for a dinner or other closing activity.

### PARTICIPANT INSTRUCTIONS:

Write down your expectations for this training event. Use one sheet of paper for each topic, with two to four words for each sheet of paper.



# THE NEED TO MINISTER TO FAMILIES

The felt needs of the family give the church a tremendous open door of opportunity to step into people's lives, encourage them, give them hope, and help them understand God's plan for marriage and families.

## CULTURAL TRENDS ARE NEGATIVE, POWERFUL, AND MOVING IN THE WRONG DIRECTION

### a. Marriage is no longer an honorable institution

Many couples have grown comfortable with divorce as a natural part of life.

### b. Decline in morality—right and wrong is relative, not absolute

As each new generation has pushed moral boundaries further than the previous generation, society has created a moral system based on convenience, feelings, and selfishness.

The consistent deterioration of the Bible as the source of moral truth has led to people becoming independent judges of right and wrong, basing their choices on feelings and circumstances.

As a result these perspectives have become mainstream:

- Homosexuality has moved from being tolerated to being celebrated.



## PARTICIPANT OBJECTIVES:

- Describe the negative forces contributing to the breakdown of the family.
- Describe some of the consequences related to the negative influences.

- Casual sex is the norm with no consequences.
- Marital infidelity is accepted as “part of life.”
- Pornography invades homes through television and the internet.

---

## **THE IMPACT ON OUR FAMILY**

As we look around us we see the chaos of divorce, the pain of abuse, and the struggles of poverty, which all can be traced to the disintegration of our family values and structure. These problems are not theoretical; they are real and personal in our own families.

The reality of this pain and its personal consequences can be a great motivator to take action. We have the opportunity to step up to the challenge and engage in the battle to save our families.



# Activity

## The Impact on our Family

*(10 minutes)*

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### LEADER NOTES:

**Materials needed:** Flip chart paper, markers

**Grouping:** Participants work in small groups, 3-4 couples.

**Instructions:** As a group make a list of negative cultural issues that affect families in your area. Then ask each individual to share a personal example of one of the issues they have seen in their own family.

**Note:** Use about 3 minutes to make the list and then have each person share their example in about 30 seconds to 1 minute each.





# YOUR FAMILY FIRST

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1 Timothy 3:1-7 provides instructions for leaders in a church: “He must manage his own household well.”



*“Your relationship with your spouse and children is the most important message on the family your church will ever hear you preach.”*

—DENNIS RAINEY

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## THE PURPOSE OF THIS SESSION:

The purpose of this session is to help pastors and their wives (and also lay-leader couples) understand the importance of their own marriage in the context of ministry to others. We often see that church leaders are so involved in their ministry activities that they do not give proper time and attention to their own marriages.

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## WHAT ABOUT YOUR MARRIAGE?

Ben Freudenburg is a pastor who was interviewed on the radio program FamilyLife Today. He was explaining the problem of pastors who are too busy. He said, “We have become pastors because we have this great passion to care for and love people to Christ. We’ll just do whatever it takes, and sometimes we

get misguided and put so much energy into the work of the church that we don't realize what we are doing to our own families and to our own lives and children."

FamilyLife has frequently talked with pastors, listened to pastors, and met with pastors in focus groups. We asked these pastors one question: "What is your greatest need when it comes to strengthening families in your church?" They answered: "My marriage and family."

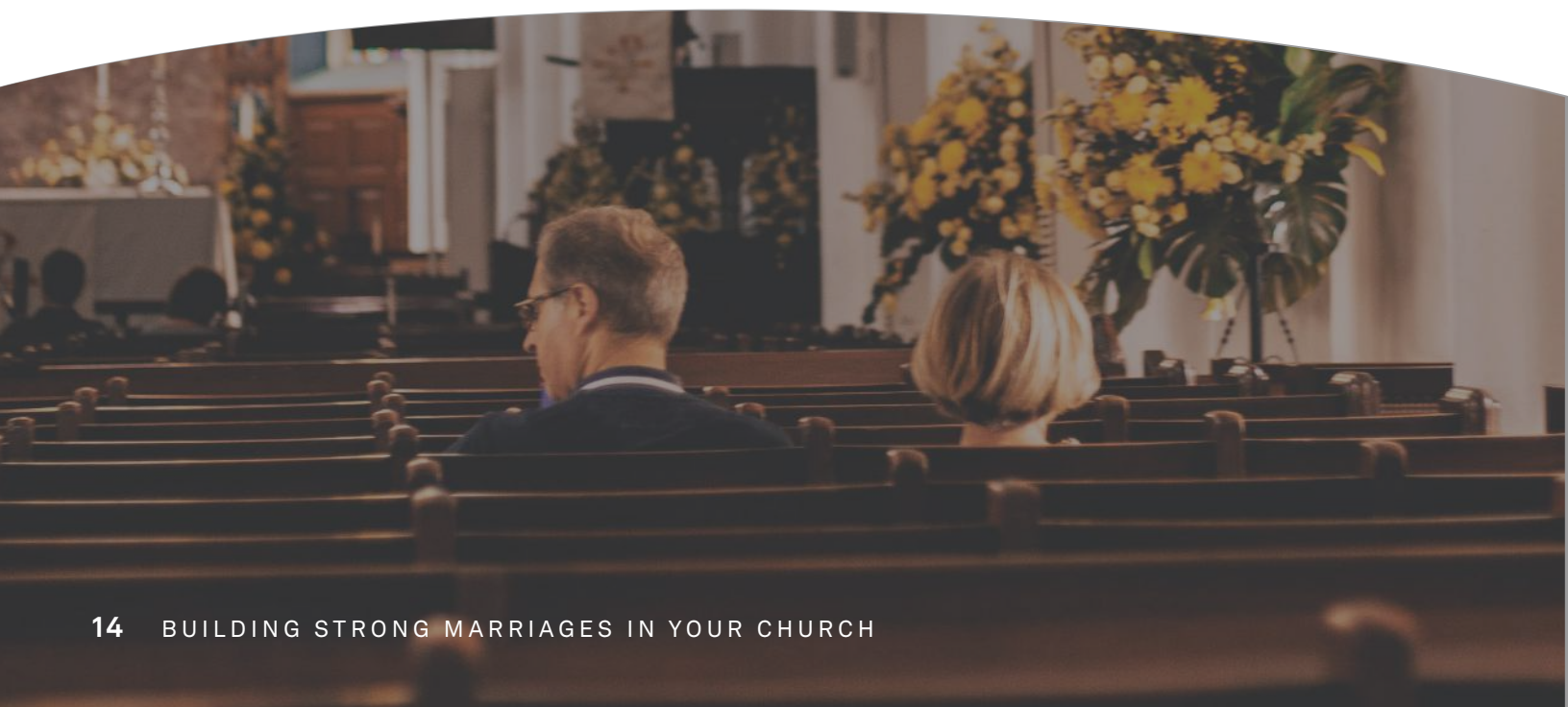
We concluded that the number-one way that FamilyLife could assist these pastors was to help them in their own families. The weight that pastors and other ministry leaders carry is one of the most difficult jobs in all of life.

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## IT'S A MATTER OF INTEGRITY

When Paul spoke of his ministry, he emphasized both the sharing of the gospel and the example of his own life (1 Thessalonians 2:1-12). He backed up his gospel message by his exemplary life. Probably nothing reveals more about a man's character than how he relates to those closest to him, especially his wife and children.

David makes very pointed remarks on personal integrity in Psalm 101:2: "I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart." Psalm 101:6 says, "He who walks in a blameless way is the one who will minister to me." This is what pastors and other leaders seek—to live clean, honest lives that will inspire and encourage others to do likewise.



## HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Many church leaders and their families are weary of feeling that they have to be “perfect examples” of a Christian family. But that’s not what your church needs—they don’t need a “perfect example.” As a couple in ministry, you won’t have a perfect family, and you shouldn’t try to project to others that you have a perfect family.

In fact, people need to know how you apply the Christian life to the struggles in your marriage and family. Often God wants to use our failures to show others how to get back on track. Many times our most profound ministry comes from our weakness.



*“The most strategic thing a pastor [or lay-leader] can do to encourage strong marriages and families in the church is to model a strong marriage. Model attentiveness. Model intimacy. Model loving parenthood. That’s the first thing. Remember that your marriage and your family are more important than your ministry.”*

—H.B.LONDON, pastor, 31 years

### a. Minister first to your spouse.

- Ministry couples are not exempt from Satan’s fiery darts; they need to protect and fortify their marriages against overwhelming stress.
- Make dating a priority—see if you can have a date without discussing issues related to your ministry.
- Pray about developing healthy boundaries for the two of you.
- Have a family time together once a week. Read, learn, and grow together.
- Pray together daily.

### b. Raise children, not “preacher’s kids.”

- Be alert to your children’s spiritual needs. Satan crouches outside every door, and he would love to significantly interfere with your family.
- Cultivate a focused relationship with each child. Your children will feel your love when each one of them knows that you will regularly devote special time and attention to them.
- Explain to your kids what you do and why. Share your passion, enthusiasm,

and urgency with them. They have a desire and a right to be proud of what you do.

- Save some pastoral time for your own sheep. Your children need you too! After your spouse, your children are your most important disciples.

**c. Redeem the time (learn how to say no).**

Church leaders might be expected to be “on call” or ready to respond 24/7 (even 365 days a year). Those in ministry need a strategy to set boundaries for their work if they are to remain effective at home:

- Use your calendar to say no: “I’m sorry, but that date conflicts with another appointment.”
- Appeal to a higher authority: “I must first consult with my spouse.”
- Decline because of your pre-determined personal boundaries: “Thank you for that opportunity, but I need time for rest.”
- Have someone else say no for you. Your spouse or perhaps a church secretary can pass along the “no.”
- Screen your calls. Just because the phone rings does not mean you must answer it at that moment.
- Take time off each week without guilt. Having a day for rest and refreshment is God’s idea.



**d. Guard your heart.**

Modeling a healthy, God-honoring marriage and family can be one of the most significant contributions you make to your church, your home, and your life.

- Take inventory: Is there anything you need to repent of in your life and family?
  - Selfishness
  - Arrogance
  - Disrespect for your spouse
  - Ignoring your children
  - Anger at a child who is difficult to love
  - Failure to pray together with your spouse
  - Etc.
- Repent. Seek help from an older mentor.
- Claim cleansing and forgiveness.

# Activity

## Assessing Priorities for Ministering to Your Family First

*(5 minutes)*

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### Individually:

1. Review each of the ideas under “How to Improve Your Marriage and Family” in this session.
2. Place a (+) next to items you feel you are doing okay, and a (-) next to those you would like to work on.

### As a Couple:

1. Share your pluses and minuses. Do not comment on your spouse’s assessment—just listen.
2. Select one or two areas that you would most like to improve on—share it with your spouse.
3. Set a time/date/location when you will commit to continue the discussion.

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

Place:\_\_\_\_\_





# ORGANIZE A FAMILY MINISTRY TEAM IN YOUR CHURCH

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## THE PURPOSE OF THIS SESSION:

The purpose of this session is to help the pastor and lay-leader couples form a Family Ministry Team. The idea is to form a team of couples, led by a lay-leader couple, to carry the load and implement the plans for launching and growing a ministry to families. Key roles on the team include: team leader couple, prayer couple, small-group couple, and events couple.

The team may grow and expand to other outreach opportunities in the future. A great way to get singles involved is to recruit them to lead ministries to other singles, youth, the elderly, etc. But for now, we will focus on some FamilyLife basics.

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## THE FAMILY MINISTRY TEAM

This session describes a suggested organizational structure, the role of the Family Ministry Team leader couple, and the roles of the team members.

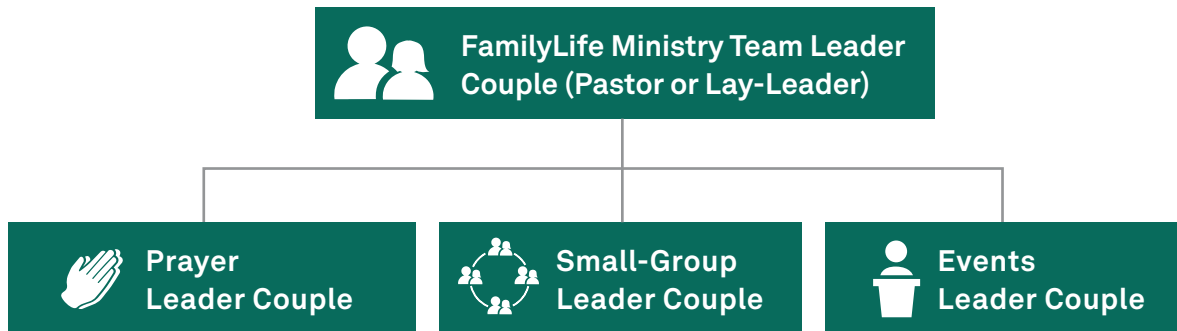


## PARTICIPANT OBJECTIVES:

- Explain the basic organization of the Family Ministry Team and the roles of the small-group leader, prayer leader, and event leader.
  - Describe the Family Ministry Team leader role.
-

## ORGANIZING THE FAMILY MINISTRY TEAM

This is a suggested team structure. You should feel free to make changes or adjustments as needed.



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### FAMILY MINISTRY TEAM LEADER COUPLE ROLE

The role of the Family Ministry Team leader couple is to work with the pastor and launch a Family Ministry in a church. The leader couple fulfills this role by organizing and leading a team. During this launching phase it is very important to follow the lead of the pastor. Specific tasks may include: recruiting team members, launching small groups, and developing a plan and a vision (in cooperation with the pastor).

First, focus on the discipleship process by helping couples develop Christian maturity. Second, focus the training on specific ministry skills for developing a Family Ministry.

- a. The discipleship and training role is very critical to ongoing team development. The leader couple needs to encourage and lead the spiritual development of team couples.
- b. Training for ministry skills should also be an ongoing process. The training should cover basic skills of leading small groups, organizing events, and implementing the strategies to grow the Family Ministry.



**Key Principle 4.1:** Build discipleship into the Family Ministry Team from the very beginning.

The Family Ministry Team leader couple and each couple on the Family Ministry Team should lead a FamilyLife small-group study or participate in a small group. The FamilyLife small-group resources are excellent materials to use in building your Family Ministry Team. Consider meeting regularly for two to three years to build the foundation of the Family Ministry Team for future growth.



**Key Principle 4.2:** Build a team through personal relationships and mentoring.

The idea is for the Family Ministry Team to be involved in regular meetings that focus on the marriages of the team members. The goal is to intentionally minister to couples in a personal and powerful manner. Couples will observe and learn the leadership style for facilitating a FamilyLife study. The FamilyLife team leader and his spouse will be modeling a key concept: God can use a husband and a wife as a couple in order to minister to others. This powerful “ministry as a couple” concept will continue to attract new couples to the Family Ministry effort.



**Key Principle 4.3:** Developing the concept for “ministry as a couple” will provide a powerful example for the growth of the entire family ministry.

---

## FAMILYLIFE TEAM MEMBERS

- a. The prayer team leader couple organizes and leads a single group or multiple groups of prayer intercessors.
- b. The small-group team leader couple is responsible for the growth and development of FamilyLife groups in the church and expanding to the surrounding community.
- c. The event team leader couple recruits the event team and plans the logistical details for each event.

## VOLUNTEERS

Many couples have the desire and capacity to engage in active volunteer roles with the Family Ministry Team. An important concept is to mobilize volunteer couples to involve them in what God is doing and help them catch the vision for “ministry as a couple.” When people are given tasks and responsibilities they begin to have a personal investment in the outcome. That means they care what happens. The more they care, the more energy they contribute. For more information on this topic, see FamilyLife Global’s *Working with Volunteers* training manual.



**Key Principle 4.4:** Mobilizing volunteer couples will help them catch the vision for “ministry as a couple.”

Note: The growth of the Family Ministry is dependent on the number of people who are willing to get involved. There is much work to be done to meet a wide variety of felt needs for the people in the church and outside the church. Couples who are being ministered to effectively will be the most willing to help others.



**Key Principle 4.5:** Thanking and affirming volunteers and also celebrating what God is doing are essential ingredients to growing a family ministry.

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## YOUR TEAM/YOUR DISCIPLES

The pastor and the Family Ministry Team leader must intentionally engage in the process of training and discipling a Family Ministry Team. They should focus on three aspects of Christian maturity. The first aspect is godly character. The second aspect is allowing the Holy Spirit to work in our lives—to be Spirit-filled; this will help develop the likeness of Jesus Christ in our lives. The character of Jesus will manifest itself in us by our love for God, our love for our spouse, our love for our neighbors, and our obedience to His commandments (Matthew 22:37-39, John 14:21). Please note that our love for our spouse will be evident and a powerful testimony and role model for the couples on the Family Ministry Team.



**Key Principle 4.6:** The first aspect of Christian maturity is godly character.

***Mini-Activity:** Make a short list of specific ways you demonstrate your love for your spouse that would be good examples for others.*

The third aspect of Christian maturity relates to ministry skills. Ministry skills help us to be effective vessels that God uses to encourage and influence others to seek Him. These skills include such things as being an effective small-group facilitator, training others to be small-group facilitators, speaking at events, building and discipling a team, etc.



**Key Principle 4.7:** The Family Ministry Team Leader must intentionally engage in the process of training and discipling a Family Ministry Team.

As ministry leaders you must engage in regular Bible study, prayer, and meditation on God's Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17). There are many Bible studies that will help believers mature as Christians. Remember, the FamilyLife small-group resources are uniquely suited to help you build into the lives and marriages of the couples on your team and grow in your relationship with your spouse at the same time.

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## SUMMARY

The role of the Family Ministry Team leader couple is to work with the pastor and launch a Family Ministry in a church. The leader couple fulfills this role by organizing and leading a team.

First, focus on the discipleship process by helping couples develop Christian maturity. Second, focus the training on specific ministry skills for developing a Family Ministry. The Family Ministry team leader couple and each couple on the Family Ministry team should lead a FamilyLife small-group study or participate in a small group. The FamilyLife small-group resources are excellent for building your Family Ministry team. Consider meeting regularly for two to three years to build the foundation of the Family Ministry Team for future growth. Many couples have the

desire and personal capacity to engage in active volunteer roles with the Family Ministry Team. An important concept is to mobilize volunteer couples in order to involve them in what God is doing and help them catch the vision for “ministry as a couple.”



#### KEY PRINCIPLES:

- Build discipleship into the Family Ministry Team from the very beginning.
- Build a team through personal relationships and mentoring.
- Developing this concept for “ministry as a couple” will provide a powerful example for the growth of the entire family ministry.
- Mobilizing volunteer couples will help them catch the vision for “ministry as a couple.”
- Thanking and affirming volunteers and also celebrating what God is doing is an essential ingredient to growing a family ministry.
- The first aspect of Christian maturity is godly character.
- The Family Ministry Team leader must intentionally engage in the process of training and discipling a Family Ministry Team.

# Activity

## Develop a Job Description for Family Ministry Team Members

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### LEADER NOTES:

**Materials needed:** Large paper; markers

**Grouping:** Divide participants into small groups.

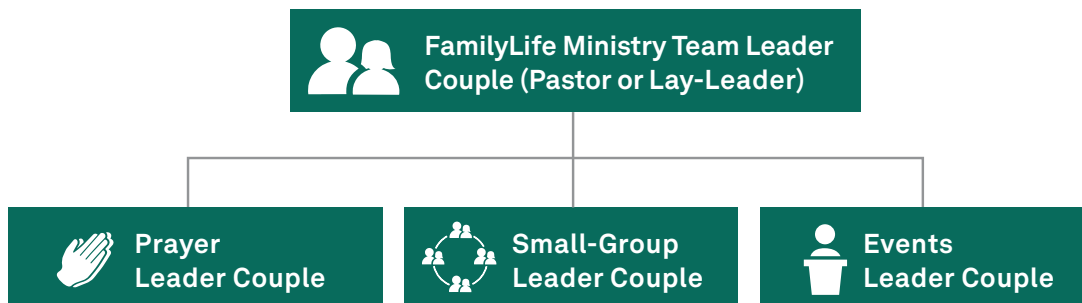
### Participant Instructions:

Scenario: You are having your first team meeting with the couples who have volunteered to be on your Family Ministry Team. You have reviewed the organizational chart below and now you need to develop a written job description for each position. You may use the job titles on the chart, or you may revise the job titles as appropriate to your situation.

### Part I: Preparation (20 min)

Step 1: Assign each couple in your group to one of the positions on the organizational diagram. Work individually as couples or work together as a group to write down your draft ideas for each job description. Include specific ideas that help to describe the job that needs to be done and how to do it.

Step 2: Sketch the organizational chart and place the job descriptions in each box.



**Part II: Presentation (10 minutes total—two minutes per group)**

Each team member will make a short presentation to report on their ideas for their assigned job description.





# THE FAMILYLIFE SMALL-GROUP ORIENTATION AND STRATEGY IN YOUR CHURCH

Can God use lay couples to have a significant impact with families? Yes!

The FamilyLife Art of Marriage Connect series consists of small-group Bible studies for couples. These studies can be used as a primary tool to help get couples involved in a Family Ministry within your church. The idea is to mobilize couples and get them involved!

This session introduces AOM Connect and other FamilyLife small-group resources and describes the benefits of being part of a small group. Most of this session provides ideas on starting a group and specifically addresses group size, preparation, and scheduling.

Additional information on this topic can be found in FamilyLife Global's Small-Group Training Manual.



**Key Principle 5.1:** Putting everything you hear about marriage into practice is like trying to swallow an elephant. FamilyLife small-group resources can cut that elephant into bite-sized pieces.

FamilyLife's small-group studies are effective when couples develop close relationships, honestly apply Scripture in their own lives, and learn from each



## PARTICIPANT OBJECTIVES:

- Participants will identify the tips for leading a successful FamilyLife small group.
- Participants will identify the important elements for a good small-group environment.
- Participants will describe the group dynamic model for a FamilyLife small group.

other. God uses meaningful relationships, biblical truth, and group dynamics to change lives. The couple that leads a small group does not need to have a perfect marriage or be expert Bible teachers. God can use their shortcomings in the lives of other couples. In fact, God may have allowed difficulties and problems in their marriage so they would be equipped to encourage others. The most effective facilitators for these small groups are couples who are willing to be transparent and share about their own struggles and challenges.



**Key Principle 5.2:** Group facilitators do not have to be gifted teachers; they are there to facilitate discussion and discovery.

*“You make an impression on people from a distance. You make an impact on people when you get up close.”* –THE LATE HOWARD HENDRICKS, Dallas Theological Seminary

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## TIPS FOR LEADING A FAMILYLIFE SMALL-GROUP STUDY

- a. Encourage balanced participation. Do not let a few people dominate the discussion.
- b. Lead by sharing personal examples. As you prepare the lesson, decide together as a couple which examples you will share. Remember, a perfect marriage is not mandatory to lead a small group. Sharing your experiences (successes and failures) shows your group that you are on this journey together.
- c. Manage the time throughout the study.
- d. Expect God to work! God, not you, causes change in people’s lives!
- e. Create an environment where God’s Spirit can work. Hospitality, warmth, acceptance, fun, and encouragement create an atmosphere where people can feel safe and spiritually nurtured.

*“But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. Having so fond an affection for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.”* –1 THESSALONIANS 2:7-8

## CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE GOD CAN CHANGE LIVES

- a. Begin each session by reviewing these small-group ground rules:
  - Share nothing about your marriage that will embarrass your spouse.
  - You may pass on any question you do not want to answer.
  - Each couple should commit to complete the projects (questions for each couple to discuss and act on) between each session.
  - Maintain confidentiality within the group.
- b. Provide a comfortable, relaxed setting.
- c. Serve simple snacks and beverages. (The opportunity to serve can be rotated among the group members.)
- d. Greet each couple and introduce them to other group members.
- e. Show respect for everyone by beginning and ending on time.
- f. Encourage couples to complete their project for each and every session. Find creative ways to encourage this endeavor. Introduce accountability by asking each couple each week to give a short report about something they learned or discussed during their project time.
- g. Remember the ground rule that allows someone to pass if they would rather not respond.



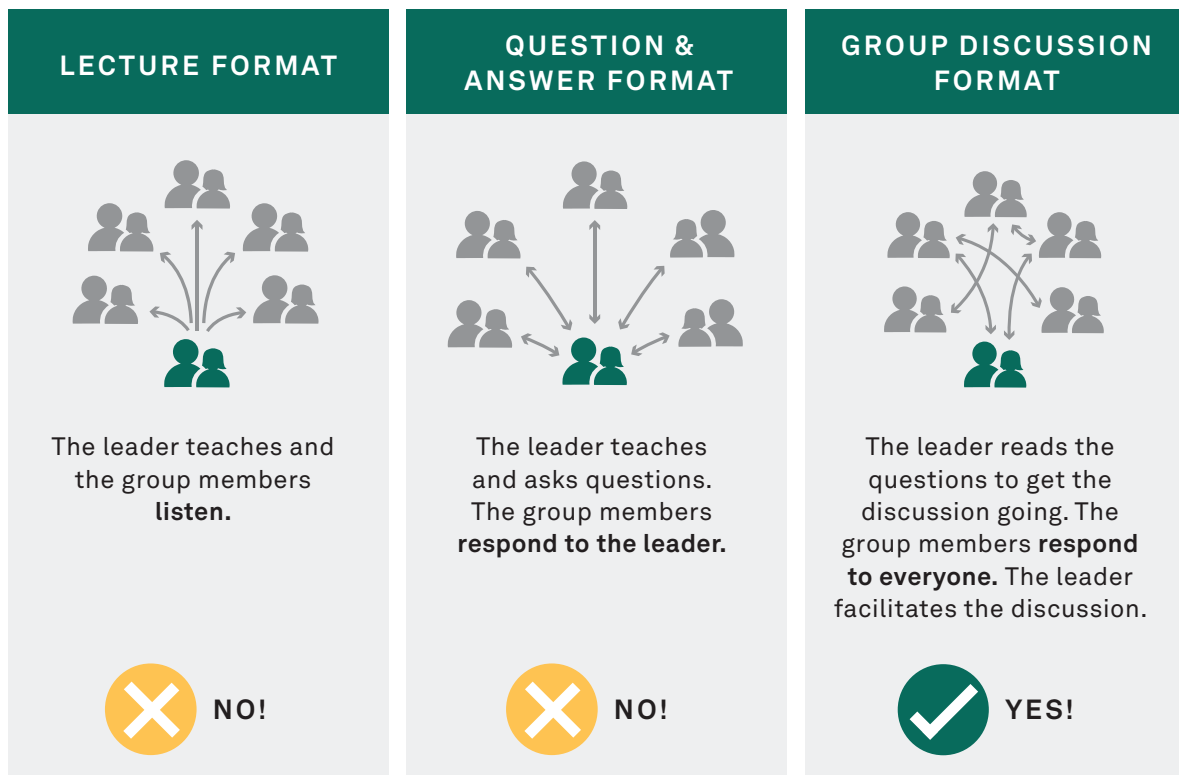
**Key Principle 5.3:** Ground rules encourage positive group dynamics and help couples avoid difficult situations.

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## GROUP DYNAMICS

- a. Arrange the group so that everyone can have eye contact.

- b. Before you ask someone to pray or read Scripture, be sure they are comfortable doing so.
- c. If any group members have difficulty finding Scripture passages, you may want to print them in advance.
- d. Don't be afraid of silence—someone will break it. Just ask the question and wait. Try to keep the discussion balanced. See diagram below.



**Key Principle 5.4:** Effective group facilitators encourage positive group dynamics.

# Activity

## Sample Session—Teamwork in Marriage and Ministry

*(60 minutes)*

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### LEADER NOTES:

**Materials needed:** Bible; writing paper; pens/pencils; stopwatch

**Grouping:** Divide participants into groups of four or five couples.

### Instructions:

Adjust the amount of time allotted for each section of the sample lesson as needed. Use the last 10-20 minutes of this activity for discussion on what was learned through the process.

### PARTICIPANT INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Divide the questions below evenly between the couples in your group.
2. Read the following sample session.
3. Each couple will take a turn as the leader couple of your group.
4. Each couple will practice leading and participating in the lesson in 10-minute intervals.

This sample session gives participants the opportunity to experience what a full FamilyLife small-group study would be like.

### **WARM-UP | 10 Minutes**

- Introduce yourself and share how you and your spouse met.
- Share with the group a time when you and your spouse worked together on something. Some ideas include cooking, doing a home renovation project, writing, speaking, building, organizing, etc. What challenges did you face? What were the benefits of working together?

### **BLUEPRINTS | 30 Minutes**

1. Share at least one way you and your mate complement each other as team members.

2. Consider the verse below. What are some of the obstacles in our culture that discourage couples from working as a team?

*“Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone?” ~ Ecclesiastes 4:9-11*

3. Do you think it is more difficult for a married couple to work as a team than others? Why?

4. Read and discuss the following verses one at a time. How can they help build teamwork in marriage?

- Hebrews 10:25

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- Ephesians 5:21

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- James 5:9

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- Romans 14:19

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- Philippians 2:3

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- James 5:16

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**WRAP-UP | 10 Minutes**

Individually write down as many ways as you can think of in one minute that you and your spouse have demonstrated positive teamwork. When time is up, exchange lists with your spouse. Share with the group something you received.

WIFE'S LIST	HUSBAND'S LIST
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**MAKE A DATE**

Make a date with your spouse in the next week to complete the following project.

**PROJECT | 60 Minutes**

**Individually (15 minutes)**

1. In what ways have you seen Ecclesiastes 4:9-11 be true in your marriage?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Make a list of reasons you are thankful for your spouse.

**As a couple (30 minutes)**

1. Share your answers from the individual time with each other.



2. Brainstorm together for romantic ways you can develop your teamwork and grow closer to each other.

3. Finish your time together by praying that God will help you to work as a team in a way that honors and glorifies him.

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## SUMMARY

FamilyLife small-group resources are great tools to reach an expanding group of people within your church and community.



## KEY PRINCIPLES:

- Putting everything you hear about marriage into practice is like trying to swallow an elephant. FamilyLife small-group resources can cut that elephant up into bite-sized pieces.
  - Leader couples do not have to be gifted teachers; they are there to facilitate discussion and discovery.
  - Ground rules encourage positive group dynamics and help couples avoid difficult situations.
  - Effective group facilitators encourage positive group dynamics.
-

# Activity

## Getting Started (Couples Project)

*(60 minutes)*

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### LEADER NOTES:

**Materials needed:** Pens/pencils

### PARTICIPANT INSTRUCTIONS:

**Answer the following questions as a couple:**

1. List several reasons you'd like to lead a FamilyLife small group (or other type of small group).
  
2. Discuss the following and write down your best answer at this time:
  - What sort of group would you like to trust God to organize (conference follow-up, church, neighborhood, outreach, mixed, or another type)?
  
  - When would you like to start?
  
  - Where would you like to meet?
  
  - What about childcare?

3. What sort of arrangements are necessary to lead the group? (Some examples are house cleaning, arranging babysitters, lesson preparation, and ordering materials.) List three and discuss who might do each.
  
4. Discuss how to recruit group members. Write down some ideas. If you have time, you may wish to start listing prospective group members on the “Our Small-Group Prayer List” sheet on the next page.
  
5. Pray together, asking for God’s guidance as you trust Him for godly families. Ask Him to help you learn to maximize your efforts by working as a team. If you listed names on the “Our Small-Group Prayer List” sheet, then pray for these couples that God would be at work in their marriages and they would accept an invitation to join your small group.

## OUR SMALL-GROUP PRAYER LIST

List the names of couples that the Lord brings to mind. Then pray daily for them that God would be at work in their marriages and they would respond positively should you invite them to join your small group.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



# EVENTS—DEVELOPING A FAMILY MINISTRY IN YOUR CHURCH

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This session describes three types of events. An exposure event is a brief opportunity for a speaker to present material that encourages the audience to apply biblical principles to their lives. Major events are a full day or longer and typically are intended for larger audiences. A training event provides the fuel for the fire that will equip lay couples and others.

1. Exposure events
  2. Major events
  3. Training events
- 

## EXPOSURE EVENTS

What is an exposure event? It is an event at which the audience is encouraged to consider how to apply biblical principles to their lives. An exposure event is an opportunity for a FamilyLife speaker to present material that “exposes” the audience to biblical principles related to marriage and family.

An exposure event may have a single twenty- to forty-minute presentation, or it may have several presentations during a full day.



## PARTICIPANT OBJECTIVES:

- Describe the characteristics of exposure events.
  - Describe the characteristics of major events.
  - Identify three primary audiences for training events.
-

The following events have worked well in many countries:

**Small-group dinner:**

A dinner venue can be a lot of fun for the hosts and guests. Encourage small-group couples to attend, as well as new couples. Whether it's candlelight romance or a barbecue picnic, atmosphere is important. Be creative!

**FamilyLife Couples Studies orientation session and rally:**

The Family Ministry Team can sponsor this type of event during an evening. It could involve testimonies, group games and activities, and one humorous FamilyLife talk.

**Marriage seminars:**

Marriage seminars can be evangelistic and great for a community outreach. A seminar usually consists of two to four well-prepared FamilyLife talks and perhaps some special music. A simple couples' project is provided between the talks.

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**MAJOR EVENTS**

Major events can include full-day events or longer such as:

- a. Couples Relationship Seminar (evangelistic)
- b. Art of Marriage
- c. A Day to Treasure
- d. Weekend to Remember®
- e. Art of Parenting
- f. Two-day marriage seminar

You may host a major event in your church, or consider a hotel or retreat center to provide a romantic getaway for couples. It's always important to consider costs and determine which venue will be affordable for couples.



**Key Principle 6.1:** Marriage seminars can be evangelistic and great for a community outreach.

## TRAINING EVENTS

Training events provide the energy and motivation that help to grow a Family Ministry. Consider three primary audiences for these training events:

- a. The Family Ministry core team (couples committed to building a Family Ministry in your church).
- b. Small-group facilitators (couples who desire to be effective small-group facilitators and contribute to the growth of a spiritual movement).
- c. Volunteers (people who have a heart for families and want to be used by God to strengthen families and help build a spiritual movement).

Each of these audiences needs to engage in training activities that:

- Disciple them in the basics of the Christian faith to help them grow spiritually.
- Build teamwork through regular meetings and consistently communicate their role in the vision to grow a Family Ministry.



**Key Principle 6.2:** Training provides the energy and motivation to grow a Family Ministry.

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## SUMMARY

FamilyLife exposure events are great for generating interest in a Family Ministry. Exposure events give your community the opportunity to become familiar with the Family Ministry.

Major events are a full day or longer and provide momentum for the ministry.

Training is a critical element to help a ministry grow.



### KEY PRINCIPLES:

- Marriage seminars can be evangelistic and great for a community outreach.
- Training provides the energy and motivation to grow a Family Ministry.



# Activity

## Develop a List of Potential Exposure Events

(35 minutes)

### LEADER NOTES:

**Materials needed:** Paper (flipcharts); markers

**Grouping:** Divide participants into groups of three or four couples.

### PARTICIPANT INSTRUCTIONS:

#### Part 1 | 20 Minutes

1. Develop a list of potential exposure events. These events should be actual events that you could likely plan in the future (not theoretical). For example: marriage seminar, parenting seminar, women's event, men's event, etc.

2. As a group, fill in the chart below:

EXPOSURE EVENT	DATE	ATTENDANCE	TOPIC
Describe the group you want to minister to:	Which month will you host the event?	How many people do you expect to attend?	What is the audience interested in?
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

**Part 2 | 15 Minutes**

1. Select a spokesperson to present your group's chart to the entire group. Keep presentation to one minute.
2. After the presentations, tape all the charts to a wall so that everyone can review what other groups wrote.



# THE VISION AND STRATEGY TO LAUNCH AND GROW A FAMILY LIFE MINISTRY IN YOUR CHURCH

The challenge to bring about great change can be overwhelming. As you consider your next steps, there is a rich resource in the story from the Old Testament of Nehemiah. God worked in his life so that Nehemiah provided essential leadership, built teamwork, and handled resistance with unusual wisdom. This session takes a close look at how he accomplished great things. Perhaps what he did can provide a pattern for you.

Nehemiah was faced with an impossible situation. How he got started may be observed in this sequence:

1. He had a clear picture of the challenging problem. **(Nehemiah 1:3)**
2. He was personally overwhelmed by the great need. **(1:4)**
3. The challenge drove him to prayer in brokenness for his nation and his people. **(1:5-10)**
4. He asked for God's hand of blessing and success upon the venture. **(1:11)**
5. He worked within the confines of his present employment, hoping that God would somehow open doors for him. **(1:11-2:6)**



**Key Principle 7.1:** A vision for changing families in a church, a city, and a nation begins with being overwhelmed with a personal burden for the great need.



## PARTICIPANT OBJECTIVES:

- Outline the process and identify the principles that Nehemiah established so that his objective of rebuilding the wall of the city was accomplished.
- Develop a brief three-year plan to grow a family ministry in your church.

## IMPLEMENTING YOUR VISION WILL ALWAYS INCLUDE FINANCIAL RESOURCES:

- a. Nehemiah assessed the financial needs that would be required for the project so that he was ready to present his vision when the opportunity arose. (2:7-9)
  - b. Nehemiah was given favor by his employer, the king. (2:6)
- 

## IMPLEMENTING YOUR VISION WILL REQUIRE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS AND OBJECTIVES FOR SEEING IT FULFILLED:

- a. The demographics and other details of the situation must be gathered. (2:11-20)
  - b. Nehemiah used the information-gathering process to motivate others to join him. (2:17)
- 

## NOT EVERYONE WAS EXCITED ABOUT WHAT NEHEMIAH HOPED TO ACCOMPLISH:

- a. There will be resistance to change. (2:19-20)
- b. Nehemiah faced ridicule and rejection from people of influence in the city. (4:1-5)



**Key Principle 7.2:** Anticipate opposition and resistance to your vision for bringing change.

## MANY PEOPLE WERE INVOLVED IN FULFILLING THE CHALLENGE OF REBUILDING THE WALLS OF THE CITY:

- a. Nehemiah enlisted volunteers to help him. (3:1-32)
- b. The volunteers worked close to their homes—they were motivated to help out where it mattered most. (3:28, 30)
- c. He inspired teamwork and a strategy to deal with the resistance. (4:9-23)



**Key Principle 7.3:** Fulfilling your vision will require many people who are eager to serve.

---

## THE VISIONARY PROJECT WAS COMPLETED! THE WALL WAS REBUILT BY VOLUNTEERS ONE BRICK AT A TIME.

- a. God blessed the project with motivated workers. (4:6)
- b. Nehemiah achieved the impossible, but he knew it was the hand of God that did it. (6:15-16)



## SUMMARY

Rebuilding the wall was a God-sized task and so is rebuilding the “walls of the family.” The task can be accomplished through a Family Ministry Team within a church made up of individuals who are obedient to God’s calling. Nehemiah was the leader; he shared his vision with others, recruited them to join him, and then developed effective teamwork.



### KEY PRINCIPLES:

- A vision to change families in a church, a community, a city, and a nation begins with being overwhelmed with a personal burden for the great need.
  - Anticipate opposition and resistance to your vision for bringing change.
  - Fulfilling your vision will require many people who are eager to serve.
-

# Activity

## Using the Tools in the Toolbox

Developing a Vision and a Strategy for FamilyLife Ministry in Your Church  
(30 minutes)

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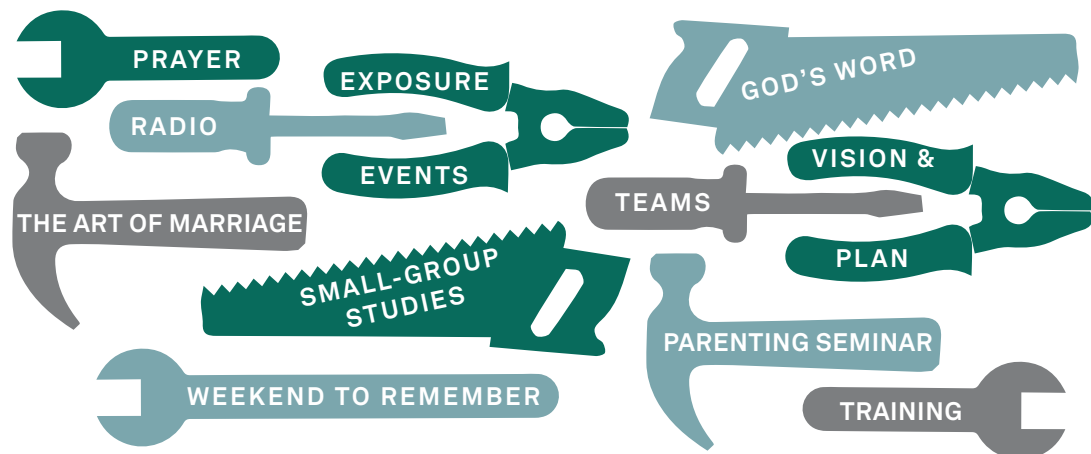
**Materials needed:** Flip chart paper, markers

**Grouping:** Participants work in small groups, three to four couples.

**Instructions:** Select one person to draw a chart on a large sheet of paper for launching, developing, and maturing a FamilyLife ministry. Then fill in the spaces as the group develops their ideas and plans.

Use ideas from the FamilyLife Toolbox to develop a vision and a strategy to launch and grow a family ministry in your church. Start by asking the pastor and key lay-leader couples to join together for prayer and training. During the training, develop the Family Ministry Team structure and a vision and plan. Next, launch small groups and nurture their growth by training facilitators, hosting events, and introducing new small-group titles.

### FAMILYLIFE TOOLBOX

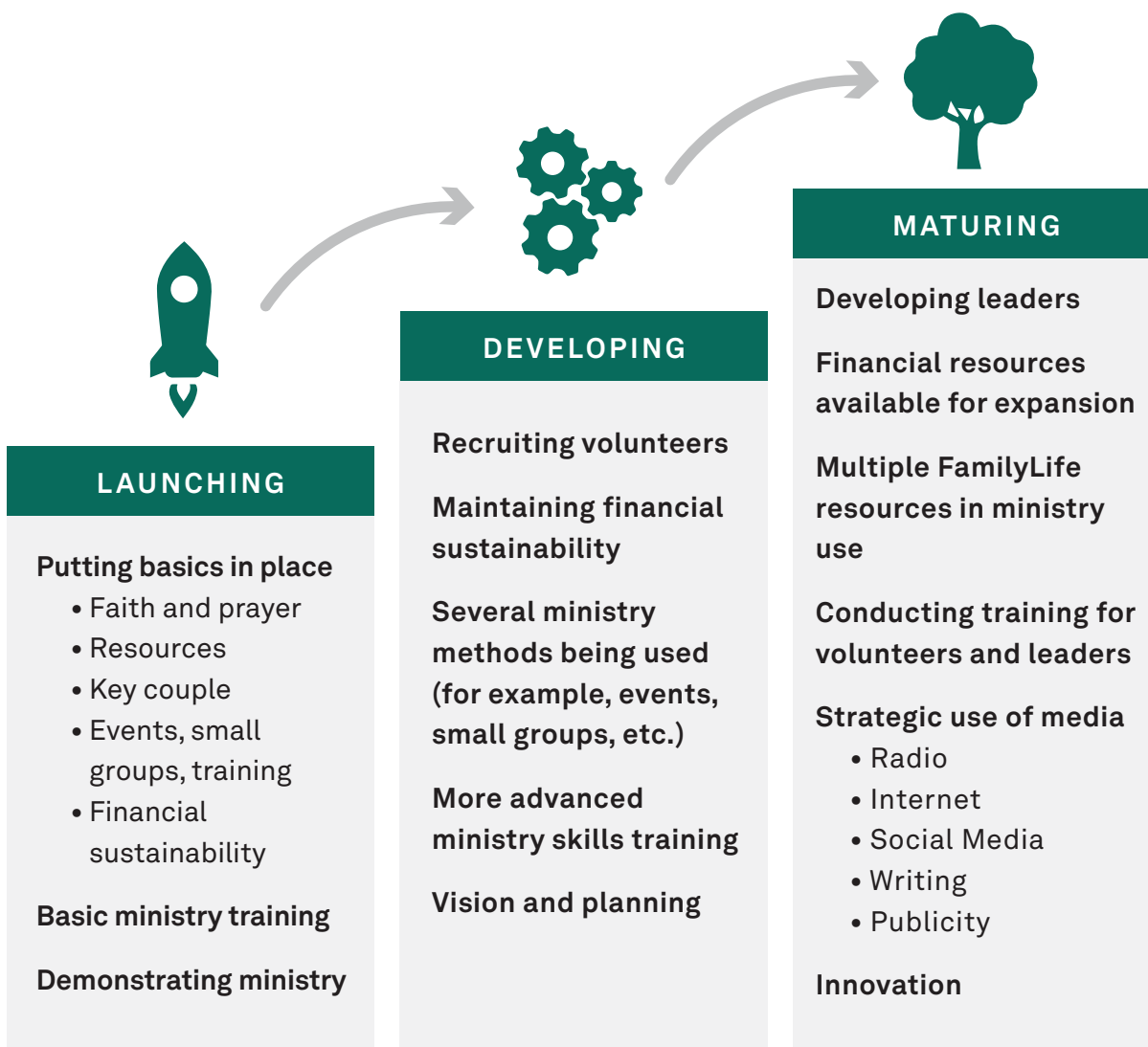


## FAMILYLIFE TOOLBOX

GETTING STARTED	TRAINING	EVENTS
Prayer	Global Outreach Strategies and Resources	For Men
Family Ministry Team		For Women
FamilyLife Small-Group Resources	Speaker Training	For Youth
FamilyLife Small Groups	Small-Group Training	For Single Parents in the Community
Vision and Plan	Working with Volunteers	Family Camp
	Building Strong Marriages in Your Church	Parenting Seminars
	Promoting Events and Small Groups	Marriage Seminars
	Funding a FamilyLife Ministry	Art of Marriage
		Romantic Dinner
		Online events



## PLAN FOR FIRST YEAR AND BEYOND



### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

#### Our Foundational Principles

Our Foundational Principles provide a scripture-based blueprint for building a godly home. This can be a helpful resource for a new FamilyLife team to establish a declaration of values. This document is available at <https://www.familylife.com/foundational-principles/>.

#### Speaker Training

A FamilyLife Ministry Team will benefit greatly from speaker training. FamilyLife's Speaker Training manual (as well as additional FamilyLife training) is available at <https://www.familylifeglobal.com/movement-makers-training/>.

# FamilyLife Global **TRAINING MANUALS**



Global Outreach Strategies and Resources (GOSAR): This manual provides an overview of our FamilyLife strategy and is the foundational training document for developing an international FamilyLife ministry.

The following how-to manuals build upon the strategies and resources given in the GOSAR:

