

BUILDING HOMES OF HOPE AND WHOLENESS

FAMILY MINISTRIES TRAINING PROGRAM FOR LOCAL CHURCH LEADERS

**Family Ministries Department
North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church**

Mission Statement

Our mission of evangelism is to provide resources, training, and networking opportunities that will instill hope and bring wholeness to families within the territory of the North American Division.

Vision Statement

Reaching Families for Eternity

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Table of Contents

1 A Firm Foundation

- 1 Biblical Foundation
- 3 Commitment
- 5 Trust
- 6 Prayer
- 6 What Have They Seen in Your House?
- 7 A Ministry of Evangelism

11 Relationship and Marriage

- 12 Singleness Is NOT a Disease
- 12 Pre-Marital Counseling
- 14 Communication
- 18 Conflict Management

23 Parenting

- 24 Before Baby
- 26 Marriage Satisfaction Declines
- 26 Discipline vs. Punishment
- 28 A Disciple-Making Parent
- 30 A Discipled Child Becomes a Disciple-Maker

35 Sexuality

- 36 Porn Is the Norm
- 38 Sex Is a Gift from God
- 39 Sex Education to Children

43 Aging Gracefully

- 44 Grandparenting
- 48 Multi-Generational Ministry
- 49 End of Life Issues

55 How to Have Effective Family Ministries at the Local Church

- 56 Committee/Organization
- 56 What Your Job is and What it is Not
- 57 Define the Needs in Your Congregation and Community
- 58 Planning
- 58 Marketing
- 59 Implementation/Evaluation/Follow-up

65 Family Ministries Church Survey

66 Family Ministries Community Survey

67 Additional Books by Drs. Claudio and Pamela Consuegra

Foreword

Dear Family Ministry Leaders,

We are delighted that you have been chosen by God to lead out in this important ministry in your local congregation. The fact that you are reading this is a testament to your desire to be faithful to His call.

The purpose of Family Ministries is to support families in a growing, joyful, and loving relationship with Jesus Christ. Our departmental mission statement reads, “Our mission of evangelism is to provide resources, training, and networking opportunities that will instill hope and bring wholeness to families within the territory of the North American Division.” You will notice that each chapter in this resource guide will introduce various elements needed to build homes of hope and wholeness, in fulfillment of that mission.

In addition, our departmental vision statement is, “Reaching Families for Eternity” and indeed that is also our desire — that we endeavor to have all our family members in heaven with us and that also includes our church family. Your dedication to fulfilling this vision statement will have a lasting impact on families as you realize that evangelism, at its best, occurs within the context of family.

So, where do you begin as you start to focus on family ministries? Look at this counsel: “Our work for Christ is to begin with the family, in the home... There is no missionary field more important than this” (White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 35). Yes, all too often we think that we must go to a faraway land to be a missionary when the truth is that the starting point is in the home.

In Jesus’ great and final commission, He directed His followers: “Go and make disciples...” (Matthew 28:19). God intended the family to be a natural setting for carrying out this directive. “As workers for God, our work is to begin with those nearest. It is to begin in our own home. There is no more important missionary field than this” (White, *Child Guidance*, p. 476).

Again, thank you for your active commitment to strengthen the family ties within your local congregation and community. May God be with you as you fulfill this sacred calling.

Yours because of Him,

Drs. Claudio & Pamela Consuegra
Family Ministries Directors
North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

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A FIRM FOUNDATION

Introduction

Our scripture verse reminds us that our homes must have a strong foundation otherwise, they will crumble when the storms come. And, make no mistake about it, every home will experience storms, sooner or later.

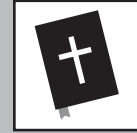
Every builder will tell you that the most important component in a stable building is the foundation. It doesn't matter what the rest of the building looks like if the foundation is not solid. Any mistakes made in the foundation will only get worse as you go higher up in the construction process. Even the untrained eye will clearly see defects as the building gets higher and higher, if the foundation is weak.

In the parable of the wise man who built his house on the rock, Jesus describes the storms of life as a matter of fact. He does not say "IF" the storms come but rather, "WHEN." We can be sure that the storms of life will come and that our home's foundation will be tested. There's no getting around it. The question is whether the foundation will stand up to the test. Have we chosen to build our homes on THE ROCK?

This means we must make Jesus the center of our homes every day and make wise choices through the guidance of his Spirit before the storms of life come. It is only as we ground our homes through faith in Him that we may be assured that our foundation is rock-solid.

Biblical Foundation

Scripture has so much to say regarding the importance of family and ways in which we can build a strong foundation that will withstand the challenges that come our way. Too often, however, we read the same verse or story over and over again without stopping to consider all of the things that, when applied, could positively impact our families. So, what does the Bible have to tell us? Let's put on our "Family Ministries Glasses" and take a look at some familiar passages. Taking a fresh new look will cast a relational hue over familiar passages which perhaps you have read over and over again but may have missed some important lessons.



Scriptural Principle

"Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock" Matthew 7: 24-25 (NIV).

Notes/Ideas



ACTIVITY #2

Read each of the four chapters of the book of Ruth and identify and list all the family-related issues they can find in the chapter. In other words, what issues/challenges did the family encounter in that chapter? And, then, think about all the ways that the church could minister to families going through those same issues today.

Ruth	Ways to Minister Today	Issues Facing Family
Chapter 1		
Chapter 2		
Chapter 3		
Chapter 4		

Do you see why the book of Ruth is one of our personal favorites to use in teaching family dynamics? Many individuals can find themselves in the book of Ruth and take comfort that their life experience is not unique. As we share about the hardships and trials that Naomi faced others can relate, identify, and come to understand that they are not alone in the challenges they face.

Through famine, immigration, death, and loss, God was still present with Naomi and Ruth as His plan was unfolding. That grandson, named Obed, whom Naomi held in her arms was in the direct lineage of Jesus. What an encouraging story of resilience, trust, and God's leading we can share with others!

Commitment

A successful marriage and family life do not always have to do with our circumstances, but it does have a lot to do with making a life-long commitment to God, to our spouse, and to our family. It involves making the decision to take the word

Notes/Ideas

divorce out of your vocabulary and replacing it with the word commitment. And, this commitment extends to your children as well.

You may say that you are committed to your family. However, where do they actually fall on your priority list? Where does your career/work rate in comparison? And, what about your use of technology? You see, it's easy to say we are committed but our behavior tells the true story of our commitment.

Go ahead, take out your calendar. Most of us have our calendars and appointments on our phones. As you look at your appointments for the next month you may see things such as: committee at work, dental appointment, kid's soccer practice, church board meeting, appointment at car garage, etc. Wait! Look again! Do you see date night with my husband/wife on that calendar? How about a scheduled family night? Does your current calendar reflect what you value? If not, maybe we need to change that. You see, if we are not intentional about scheduling these things they will not happen automatically. They need to be put on our calendars and those times need to be held as sacred blocks of time.

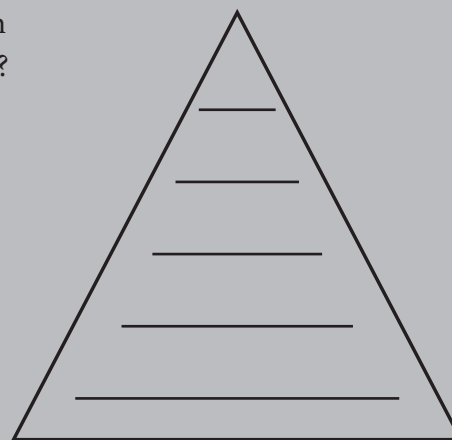


Activity #3

Take a moment to think about your life today.

1. Make a list of the ten most important things (and people) in your life.
2. Then, on the pyramid below, place the top five in order from the most important (at the top) to the least important (at the bottom).
3. Examine your priority pyramid. Does it reflect your faith in God? Does it reflect your commitment to your family?

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



As Christians, God should always take first place in our life. This should be reflected in our personal and family daily devotional time, study of the bible, church involvement, and how we practice our faith in our day to day activities. Most likely we all put Jesus at the top of the pyramid. However, there is usually some struggle as to what occupies second place. Many of you may say that family takes the second slot (as it should) but when it comes to practicing this, we often fall short. The thing that most often pushes family aside is our work/career. Having a good work ethic is admirable and being recognized as an outstanding employee for the company is commendable. However, we should never lose sight of the fact that our families are the most important treasure God has entrusted us with on this earth!

A true commitment to family will be reflected in our actions and in our calendars. This type of commitment will help us in building a home of hope and wholeness that will weather the storms that come.

Trust

Trusting God when things are going well is easy. But, when that boat starts to rock and the waves start spilling over the side, we start to panic just as the disciples did. Let's admit that it's easy for our faith to slide as we are faced with job losses, death in the family, terminal illness, a prodigal child, etc. However, building a home that withstands these storms of life involves trusting in God to carry us through. We may not be able to see a way around the situation, but we can still trust that God has already mapped out a path for us.

Trust in God! Remember how the disciples responded when the storm crashed upon their boat? (Mark 4:35-41) They panicked and failed to remember that the ONE who could help them was in the boat with them. They were so busy focusing on the wind and the waves that they forgot to look down and see their Savior.

Trusting God starts with having a relationship with Him. Who do you put your trust in? Aren't they the people you know? We need to make sure getting to know God is a priority. Friendship takes time; it takes a commitment to the relationship. It is about talking, listening, and learning about the other person. And, it is only as we do this with God, our Savior, that we truly can learn to trust Him. If learning to trust is dependent upon having a relationship, then here are some ways we can develop that trusting relationship with God:

- **Personal Bible Study and Prayer** — It starts with you, as head of your family. Develop that personal relationship with Jesus through your own Bible study and prayer life.
- **Daily Family Worship** — Time should be set aside each day for family worship. It needs to be age-appropriate, engaging, and geared toward the youngest member of the family. This should be scheduled at the same time each day, all family members should be expected to be present, and nothing else should take the place of this worship time together as a family.
- **Church Attendance** — Having a church family is so important. These members, with like-minded faith values become like an extended family where faith is emphasized, taught, reinforced, and practiced in meaningful ways.

A Special Note to Parents

Your child will learn to trust Jesus as they observe you. Do they witness you on your knees in prayer? Do they see you having personal daily devotional and prayer time? How do you handle disappointments? Do you go to church each week? What is your attitude towards God and the church? Yes, it matters. Your trusting relationship with God will go a long way in helping them develop the same.

Notes/Ideas

- **Prayer** — Most of us pray before we eat our meals and we may even pray before bed, but prayer needs to be so much more than that. We need to make talking to Jesus as common in our homes as taking to each other. Read more below concerning the importance of prayer.

Spending time with Jesus in all your daily activities will assist in building that special relationship with Him so that you will learn to trust Him, even when the winds start howling and the waves start spilling over into the boat. Above all, you will see how much God cares about you and your family and come to know that He is in the boat, right beside you, during every storm. Trust Him!

Prayer

Prayer is another one of those main ingredients to building a home of hope and wholeness. Here are some beautiful reminders about prayer.

- **Pray for Wisdom** — “But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting.” (James 1:5–6)
- **Relax, God’s in the Boat** — “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6–7)
- **Talk to God as to a Friend** — “Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us but brings us up to Him” (White, 1956, p. 93).

What Have They Seen in Your House?

Did you ever stop to consider the fact that your home has the potential to be a powerful witness for Christ? If asked, what would your neighbors say about your homelife, your relationship to your spouse, your parenting, your values? What do others see as you go about your day to day life?

Emissaries from Babylon once came to King Hezekiah of Judah out of interest in his miraculous recovery from a fatal illness and the supernatural sign linked with it (the movement ten degrees backward of the sundial shadow described in 2 Kings 20). Hezekiah happily received these guests, but he seems to have been silent about his healing experience. He evidently put little or no emphasis on the things in his house that would have opened the hearts of these inquiring ambassadors to the knowledge of the true God. Hezekiah gave the ambassadors a tour of his home that showcased his armory and expansive treasure. When they had left, the prophet Isaiah confronted him with a penetrating question: “What have they seen in your house?” (2 Kings 20:15; Isaiah 39:4). The question was sobering and too late Hezekiah realized that his pride had led him to give away state secrets of national wealth and armaments. Even more importantly, he had missed a rare opportunity to share the truth about the God who had healed him.

Let’s us not be too quick to harshly judge King Hezekiah. Are we not often guilty of the exact same thing? What do we showcase when visitors come to our home? Do we show off the brand-new large screen television, the new entertainment center with outdoor speakers, and all the latest technology

that we have added to our homes? Or, is it evident that Jesus is the center of our homes and it is His working in our lives that we are ready to showcase and share?

You see, if our homes are built on a strong biblical foundation, if we are committed to being the kind of husband, wife, or single person that God has called us to be, then it will be no secret to our neighbors and others who know us.



ACTIVITY #4

You may do this activity regardless of your family makeup: as a couple, with your children, or as a single adult.

1. Spend time thinking and talking about the mission of your family as it relates to what we have learned in this chapter.
2. Write a family mission statement. Here’s an example of a Family Mission Statement: The mission of our family is to model Jesus’ love to each family member and to share the gospel message to friends, family, and neighbors.
3. Then list at least five specific things you can do (as a family) to accomplish this mission.

Family Mission Statement	Ways to Accomplish Mission
	1.
	2.
	3.
	4.
	5.

A Ministry of Evangelism

Now that we have explored ways to strengthen the spiritual foundation of our homes, we must consider the potential impact that the members of a Christ-centered home could have upon their communities. Each family represents a powerful evangelistic team who can share Jesus with others.

You see, all too often we leave evangelism to the pastor or other professionals and think of it as an event or series of meetings held in the church. However, evangelism at its best happens each day as you interact with others around you. It is more of a lifestyle than something that happens occasionally. We need to put family and evangelism together to discover the powerful life-changing force it can create.

Remember, family ministries is a ministry of evangelism. It must first begin inside the walls of our own home. Look at these powerful words,

“Far more powerful than any sermon that can be preached is the influence of a true home upon human hearts and lives. . . Our sphere of influence may seem narrow, our ability small, our opportunities few, our acquisitions limited; yet wonderful possibilities are ours through a faithful use of the opportunities of our own homes” (White, 1905, pp. 352, 355).

But family ministries, or family evangelism, cannot be confined to the home; it must also be what happens once we leave our dwelling place.

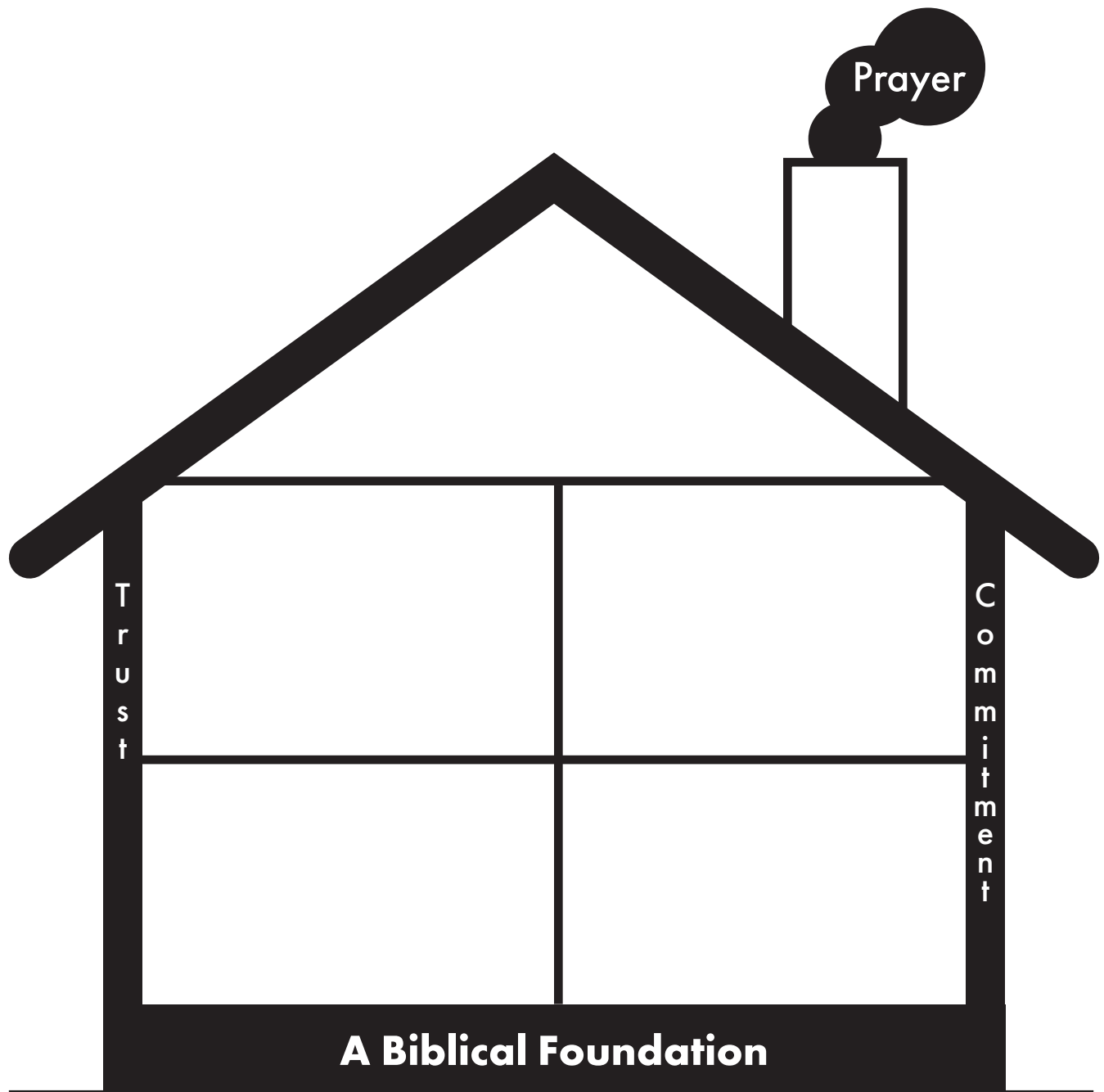
“The mission of the home extends beyond its own members. The Christian home is to be an object lesson, illustrating the excellence of the true principles of life. Such an illustration will be a power for good in the world. . . As the youth go out from such a home, the lessons they have learned are imparted. Nobler principles of life are introduced into other households, and an uplifting influence works in the community” (White, 1952, p. 31).

So, as you answer the question, “What have they seen in your house?” and as you review the activity that you did above, thinking of practical ways to fulfill the mission in your home, understand that the answer to that question and every one of those strategies is evangelistic in nature. Yes, your family is one of the most powerful evangelizing teams in the world!

Wrap-Up

So, what does the solid foundation of a home look like? It is one that rests upon strong biblical principles and one where faith is evident to all you come in contact with. In summary:

- Build your home upon THE ROCK!
- Commit your marriage and your family to God and make Him a priority in your life.
- Make sure your priority to your family is evident in the way in which you live.
- Trust in the one who is in the boat with you!
- Pray for wisdom in all the decisions you make.
- Live in such a way that your home reflects Jesus to others!
- Make sure others see Jesus in your house!



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