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FAMILY GROUP ACTIVITIES
IN THE
DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIAN PERSONALITY

With Special Reference
to the Presbyterian New Curriculum

by
LOIS BEAL
B. S., State Teachers College, Trenton, N. J.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
INTRODUCTION	i
A. Statement of the Problem	iv
B. Significance of the Problem.	v
C. Method of Procedure.	v
D. Sources of Data.	vi
I. A STUDY OF FAMILY GROUP ACTIVITIES IN LIGHT OF THE NEEDS OF GROWING CHRISTIAN PERSONALITY.	1
A. Introduction	2
B. The Needs of Growing Christian Personality	2
1. Security	4
2. Growth Toward Independence	5
3. Social Adjustment.	6
C. Description of Selected Family Group Activities	9
1. Conversing Together.	10
2. Planning Together.	13
3. Working Together	16
4. Celebrating Together	18
5. Exploring Together	20
a. Investigating the Community.	20
b. Making Scientific Discoveries.	21
c. Enjoying Nature.	22
6. Creating Together.	25
a. Art: Painting, Modeling, Crafts.	25
b. Story Telling and Reading.	27
c. Sharing Experiences in Music	29
d. Dramatics.	30
7. Playing Together	32
8. Worshipping Together	33
D. Evaluation of Family Group Activities as a Means of Meeting the Needs of Growing Christian Personality.	34
1. Conversing Together.	35
2. Planning Together.	35
3. Working Together	36
4. Celebrating Together	37
5. Exploring Together	37
6. Creating Together.	37
a. Art: Painting, Modeling, Crafts.	37
b. Story Telling and Reading.	38
c. Sharing Experiences in Music	38
d. Dramatics.	39
7. Playing Together	39
8. Worshipping Together	39
E. Summary.	40

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II. FAMILY GROUP ACTIVITIES AS SUGGESTED IN THE PRESBYTERIAN NEW CURRICULUM.	42
A. Introduction	43
B. Family Group Activities Emphasized	43
C. Method of Presentation	45
1. Conversing Together.	45
2. Planning Together.	46
3. Working Together	47
4. Celebrating Together	47
5. Exploring Together	48
a. Investigating the Community.	48
b. Making Scientific Discoveries.	49
c. Enjoying Nature.	50
6. Creating Together.	51
a. Art: Painting, Modeling, Crafts.	51
b. Story Telling and Reading.	52
c. Sharing Experiences in Music	52
d. Dramatics.	53
7. Playing Together	53
8. Worshipping Together	54
D. Summary.	54
III. A SUGGESTED FAMILY PROGRAM FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH .	56
A. Introduction	57
B. A Year's Calendar for Family Programs in the Church	58
C. Suggestions Supplementary to the Regular Planned Programs of the Church	61
D. Summary.	64
GENERAL SUMMARY.	65
APPENDIX A	68
APPENDIX B	72
BIBLIOGRAPHY	77

INTRODUCTION

FAMILY GROUP ACTIVITIES
IN THE
DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIAN PERSONALITY

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With Special Reference
to the Presbyterian New Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

There have been many indications during recent years of a renewed recognition of the home as the most influential factor in the development of Christian personality. Highbaugh expressed this consensus of opinion thus:

Let us look at these situations: the family as the cohesive force binding a nation together, the family as the transmitter of culture in the confusion of changing cultures, the home as the essential training ground of democracy, the family critically needed to nurture and love and give security to the growing child who is being pulled apart in the stress of modern life, . . . the family as the conveyor of Christian nurture, necessary to an ongoing church. In the light of these situations we must recognize the family as the most important unit in society.¹

This is but one of many similar statements concerning the importance of the home in the lives of growing children. Yet while the familiar phrase ". . . the American home is basic to our civilization"² is ringing in one's ears, another more sombre tone is heard ringing equally as

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1. Irma Highbaugh: Source Book on Home and Family Life, p. 8.
2. A.K. De Blois and D.R. Gorham: Christian Religious Education: Principles and Practice, p. 356

loudly, ". . . our American homes are not what they used to be."¹ These two familiar phrases present so striking a contrast that one cannot help but ask, why.

The early American family was actually a society in itself, self-contained and self-sustaining. Every farm home "was a factory and a repair shop; a shoe shop and a cobblery, a carpenter shop, a soap factory and tallow candelry"² and a thousand and one other things as well. Everyone in the family had his work to do, and all were united in the common duties of everyday life. Indeed, the home was the center of all human activities and interests.

But civilization, through its introduction of machinery and factories, has taken from the home one function after another and assigned them to specialists, thus setting the home free from many burdens. Many a city home today is little more than a "place in which to sleep, eat occasionally, and wrangle at all other times."³ The members of the household live a widely scattered life. The family group has thus suffered a loss of unity and coherence and family loyalty, which can grow only out of common interests and mutual activities.

De Blois and Gorham see a real danger as "the

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1. De Blois and Gorham, op. cit., p. 356.
2. George Walter Fiske: The Changing Family, p. 22.
3. Lawrence Augustus Averill: Adolescence, A Study in the Teen Years, p. 351.

American home, and even the normally Christian home is threatened by new conditions of living and by alien influences that are unreligious and too often irreligious."¹ They describe these "alien influences" as the complexity of our modern life, the lowered moral ideals and habits of people, the fact that much more time is spent in "shallow diversions" and the unfortunate weakening of the bonds between the church and the home.

A. Statement of the Problem

Recognizing the importance of the family in the development of personality and more particularly Christian personality, it is the purpose of this study to discover in light of the needs of growing Christian personality, what the family should provide in the way of family group activities, and how the church can help to promote such activities. Because personality grows in so many different areas, it is necessary to limit this study in two ways. First, the family group activities described will be selected on the basis of the emphasis placed upon them by the various authors studied. Secondly, inasmuch as the early years of childhood are the foundational years, the study will be limited to families with children under twelve years of age.

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1. De Blois and Gorham, op. cit., pp. 356-357.

B. Significance of Problem

For too long Christian living has been associated with a few acts and experiences especially called "Christian", such as going to church, praying, and reading the Bible. However, as is generally recognized, well-developed Christian personality rests upon far more than a few events in life, important though they may be. Personality develops along innumerable lines, and if the personality is to be both well-developed and Christian, there must be the Christianization of all aspects of life, rather than just a few. Thus the problem has presented itself, as to how certain family group activities meet the needs of growing Christian personality, and how the church can encourage these activities. Family conditions today present to the church one of its most serious problems. Richard Lentz makes a striking statement in his article, "The Church's Opportunity in Family Education:" "More frequently than the church realizes, families are disunited rather than united by their church affiliations."¹ It is most essential in the light of this that churches see what they can do toward uniting families, and that they do it.

C. Method of Procedure

The first chapter will be concerned with a study

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1. Richard E. Lentz: "The Church's Opportunity in Family Education," International Journal of Religious Education, October, 1950, p. 3.

of the needs of growing Christian personality, a description of selected family group activities, and an evaluation of the same as a means of meeting the needs. The second chapter will be a study of the Parent-Teacher Magazines of the Presbyterian New Curriculum in order to discover which of the aforementioned activities are included, what degree of emphasis is placed upon each, and by what methods they are presented.

In light of the family activities suggested by the Presbyterian New Curriculum, a family program for one year will be set up for a church using the New Curriculum materials, with the objective in view of initiating these activities in the homes of church families. This program will constitute the third chapter.

D. Sources of Data

The primary sources of data for the first chapter will be books dealing specifically with family life, from both the secular and Christian standpoint. These books will be selected on the basis of availability, upon recommendation of American Home Economics Association and inclusion in the bibliography of Highbaugh's Source Book on Home and Family Life.

Chapter two will consist solely in a study of the Parent-Teacher Magazines of the Presbyterian New Curriculum, Growing, Opening Doors, and Discovery for the

years 1948-49 and 1949-50.¹

The final chapter will be predominantly original, with the use of some suggestions from various denominational leaflets.

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1. This is the popular term for the Christian Faith and Life curriculum.

CHAPTER I

A STUDY OF FAMILY GROUP ACTIVITIES IN LIGHT
OF THE NEEDS OF GROWING CHRISTIAN PERSONALITY

CHAPTER I

A STUDY OF FAMILY GROUP ACTIVITIES IN LIGHT OF THE NEEDS OF GROWING CHRISTIAN PERSONALITY

A. Introduction

Chapter One will consist in a study of the needs of growing Christian personality, an investigation of the various possible forms of family group activities, and an evaluation of these activities in the light of the stated needs. In order to make this study, books on family life were selected, written from the secular as well as the distinctly Christian standpoint. These books were analyzed and compared in order to discover the needs emphasized and the activities described.

B. The Needs of Growing Christian Personality

A family, simply because it is a family, is constantly in a state of flux. Members change in age, in health, in interests, in financial condition, in loyalties, in abilities, and in ambitions. Even if the family did not change of itself, it would still be constantly changed by outside events: by war, by scientific developments, by depression and inflation, and by a multitude of other things which directly or indirectly influence the family.

The family which is going to meet these changes and survive them must have flexibility and adaptability. But it cannot have these things unless it is a stable family first. It cannot be a stable family unless each member of it has achieved stability.

It is a common thing for parents to feel that the growth of their children is their responsibility. However, Mrs. Bacmeister¹ claims that, actually, any individual's growth is primarily his own business, which he must accomplish for himself. Of course he receives contributions from his family, his friends, his school and community, and even the world as a whole, both past and present, but no one can grow for him. Whether or not he will use these contributions is something for him to decide for himself. However, she is careful to point out that this does not mean that there is nothing for parents to do. There is much that can be done indirectly to help children grow. It is the responsibility of the parents to provide good materials appropriate to each stage of the child's growth, and to see that the environment is conducive to healthy growth.

The problem to be investigated is: what kind of environment is conducive to healthy growth, or what are

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1. Rhoda W. Bacmeister: Growing Together, p. 22.

the needs of growing Christian personality?

1. Security

The authors of the books studied are in unanimous agreement that security is the basic need of every growing personality.¹ The world in which we live is filled with uncertainty and insecurity. At the same time, the mental and physical health of a child is dependent upon emotional security. It therefore rests as the responsibility of the home to provide that stability which has disappeared from the outside world. Garrison and Sheehy feel that, "For a child to have a feeling of confidence and stability in society and in the situations he must face in the world, he must first feel confidence and security in his own home."² Wieman closely associates "a deep sense of security" with a sense of "self-worth".³ Benedict and Franklin clarify this idea as a child's

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1. Cf. Bacmeister, op. cit., p. 23.
Cf. Agnes E. Benedict and Adele Franklin: The Happy Home, p. 16.
Cf. Jean Schick Grossman: Life With Children, p. 70.
Cf. Gertrude E. Chittenden: Living With Children, p. 97ff.
Cf. Jane Mayer: Getting Along in the Family, p. 30.
Cf. Regina W. Wieman: The Family Lives Its Religion, p. 36.
Cf. Ruth Davis Perry: Children Need Adults, p. 5.
Cf. Wilfred and Frances Tyler: The Little World of Home, p. 95.
Cf. Percy R. and Myrtle H. Hayward: The Home and Christian Living, p. 30.
Cf. Charlotte G. Garrison and Emma D. Sheehy: At Home With Children, p. xi.
2. Ibid., p. x.
3. Wieman, loc. cit.

confidence in himself because of the fact that his parents¹ believe in him. Mrs. Bacmeister elaborates this idea still farther when she states:

The feeling that he exists in a stable, safe universe comes to the child first and most strongly through the love and protection of his parents . . . He feels strong and important through their interest and affection, and sure that they are always in the background ready to respond to his needs.²

The child needs to feel himself as a valued part of something bigger. He, as an individual, is accepted for a unique place in the group, not only because they love him but because they need him.³

2. Growth Toward Independence

Next to security, growth toward independence⁴ seems to be of greatest importance. Benedict and Franklin state that "independent powers of thought and action" must be developed in children because "only in this way do they⁵ grow up." Children must be given opportunity through physical, mental, and emotional experiences to "explore the world a bit, run into difficulties, and try out their

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1. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 22.
2. Bacmeister, op. cit., p. 23.
3. Ibid., p. 26.
4. Cf. Ibid., p. 27.
Cf. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 20.
Cf. Grossman, op. cit., p. 46.
Cf. Chittenden, op. cit., p. 103ff.
Cf. Mayer, op. cit., p. 32.
Cf. Wieman, op. cit., p. 132.
Cf. Perry, op. cit., p. 2.
Cf. Tyler, op. cit., p. 23.
Cf. Hayward, op. cit., p. 28.
Cf. Garrison and Sheehy, op. cit., p. ix.
5. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 18.

budding powers."¹ It is only through exercise in making decisions and meeting difficulties, that abilities along these lines are developed. In its report, the Child and Family Committee of the I C R E, states that "there needs to be help toward growth in individual initiative, dependability and cooperativeness."²

Lawrence Jacks expresses this need for adventure opportunities in this way:

Man is a skill-hungry animal, hungry for skill in his body, hungry for skill in his mind, and never satisfied until that skill-hunger is appeased . . . No amount of ready-made pleasures purchased on the market, no intensity of external excitement, will ever compensate for the loss of the creative impulse, or for the starvation of his essential nature as a skill-hungry human being.³

Garrison and Sheehy agree that "honest curiosity and experimental attitude must be encouraged."⁴ However, they make it clear that "strong creative urge must be developed in the right direction."⁵

3. Social Adjustment

The authors investigated are again unanimously agreed on the importance of learning to get along with

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1. Bacmeister, op. cit., p. 27.
2. International Council of Religious Education, Children's Work Advisory Section, "Report of Child and Family Committee", p. 4.
3. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 12.
4. Garrison and Sheehy, op. cit., p. 189.
5. Ibid., p. 14.

other people.¹ Hart expresses the need for "creative relationships with the surrounding world--with both the physical and the social environment . . . Habits of self-discipline and of social adjustment are essential to the fulfillment of personality."² Bacmeister describes it as the need of learning how to "make friends and accept community standards."³

It has been observed that the authors studied are in complete agreement upon three basic needs of growing personality: the need for security in a world that is anything but secure, the need for adventure through which the individual may grow toward independence, and the need for opportunities to grow into a satisfactory relationship with others. Here some authors stop, whereas others go on to what they consider to be needs more basic than those already mentioned. Character development is not something that just happens. Bacmeister says of it: "This thing we call character and are all so eager to develop in our

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1. Cf. Bacmeister, op. cit., p. 29.
Cf. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 17ff.
Cf. Grossman, op. cit., p. 75.
Cf. Chittenden, op. cit., p. 104ff.
Cf. Mayer, op. cit., p. 38ff.
Cf. Wieman, op. cit., p. 149ff.
Cf. Perry, op. cit., p. 24.
Cf. Tyler, op. cit., p. 107.
Cf. Hayward, op. cit., p. 32.
Cf. Garrison and Sheehy, op. cit., p. 3ff.
2. Hornell and Ella B. Hart: Personality and the Family, p. 283.
3. Bacmeister, loc. cit.

children is at basis largely a matter of loyalties--to people, to groups, and to ideals."¹ In fact, she feels that loyalties are of such importance that she devotes two full chapters to that subject.² Ideals discussed in these chapters are: alertness and enterprise, friendliness, courage, honesty, generosity, truthfulness, and responsibility. She also discusses the importance of

the loyalty to something greater than mere mankind--religion, philosophy, ethics, or whatever one may choose to call his picture of what the world is all about and what his place in it is. In its fully mature form this involves the organization of all factors of the personality and comprises three parts, a basis of emotions and attitudes, a philosophy or theology to correspond, and the expression of both in conduct."³

Grace Overton states, "There is great danger that in our work for the social security of our children, we neglect that most fundamental need for spiritual security."⁴

Tyler goes on to claim that it is not enough to have faith in or loyalty for something. The object of our faith is extremely vital.

If family life today has been "commercialized and sensualized" by the world, surely God is now looking to Christian people to "spiritualize" it. Our one passion should be to glorify him in the family circle, "God. . . who is above all, and through all, and in all" (Ephesians 4:6).⁵

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1. Bacmeister, op. cit., p. 72.
2. Ibid., Chapters IV and V.
3. Ibid., p. 86.
4. Wilfred and Frances Tyler: The Little World of Home, p. 95.
5. Ibid., p. 115.

George William and Ruth McAfee Brown have drawn up a list of eight basic needs of growing Christian personality which includes those already discussed:¹

1. Resourcefulness to meet new situations
". . . it is a part of growing up to take the risks and the hazards of making decisions and carrying them out."
2. Ability to get along with people
3. Personal integrity
"We want them to have the power to be the kind of persons who can defy the power of mass thinking and do the right, even if it means standing alone. Nothing but courage that comes from God can give our children such power."
4. A constructive purpose in life
5. Ability to stand the tests of life
6. Education for a successful marriage
7. Security in a baffling world
"We want our children to feel secure; to be aware that there is a two-fold love that they can always count on: their parents' love and God's love."
8. A vital faith
". . . not a passive, formal, stereotyped affair, but something active and significant. . . all the wants listed above are related to religion, and are more likely to be realized in a Christian home than in a non-Christian one. . . religion involves, not a part of life, a certain day of the week, a certain season of the year, but all of life--every day of living and every activity undertaken. . . And deep down in their hearts Christian parents know that all these wants can be obtained only through a vital faith."

C. Description of Selected Family Group Activities

The particular family group activities, selected because of their emphasis by the authors studied, are as follows: conversing, planning, working, celebrating,

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1. George William and Ruth McAfee Brown: Teaching Religion in the Home, pp. 8-11.

exploring, creating, playing, and worshipping. The following aspects of exploring will be investigated: the community, science, and nature. Creating together will be subdivided thus: art: painting, modeling, and crafts; story telling and reading; sharing experiences in music; and dramatics.

1. Conversing Together

Hart explains that the greatest difference between the learning of animals and that of human beings is the fact that whereas animals learn almost entirely by experiencing pain when they make mistakes, and pleasure when they do that which is correct, human beings to a great extent learn by "gaining sudden insight into the problems which confront them."¹ Human beings also learn by being given specific rules to follow, such as a recipe in a cook book, or directions for parking a car. As early as the children can understand language, the parents can begin to help them gain insights, and to use trustworthy rules for solving his problems.

Mary Clemens Odell in her book Our Little Child Faces Life writes of an experience which might well happen to any mother or father:

When Dicky first entered the questioning stage, at two and a half years, I found it most exasperating to have

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1. Hart, op. cit., p. 395.

him ask me a thought-provoking question when I was hurrying through the morning routine; and I caught myself putting him off with vague and unsatisfactory answers. Then something woke me up to the fact that I was missing a real opportunity to guide the development of Dicky's character. I had in back of my mind that when I had time I would talk to Dicky about these things, or that he would get answers to his questions in our Sunday talks. . . So I began to take note of his questions, and found they gave splendid leads into just the sort of discoveries I wanted Dicky to make; and I made it a point to answer him then and there regardless of time and tasks. Often I found these replies resulted in happy discussions which brought us closer together.¹

It is the opinion of Benedict and Franklin that "The way families talk together determines to no small extent the kind of home life they are able to achieve."² Of course conversation in a family is as natural as living and breathing, and cannot in any way be separated from the rest of life. However, the fact that children and adults do not use words in the same way makes it necessary not only to understand the individual child, but also to understand these differences in the use of language. The result is then, not simply an exchange of words, but a "meeting of the minds."³ Conversation between a mother and her four-month old baby does not depend upon words; yet there is a rich and close communion between the two. Basically it is an expression of love.

Then comes the time when affection is no longer

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1. Mary Clemens Odell: Our Little Child Faces Life, p. 11.
2. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 43.
3. Ibid., Cf. p. 43, 44.

expressed in sign language, but in words. The scope of conversation naturally is broadened to include any number of different things. It is still an expression of affection, although now more individualized. Ideally, as the child grows older and gains greater command of words, as his understanding of the adult world deepens, he and his parents should draw even closer in conversation.¹ It is of the greatest importance that the parents understand the conversation of the child. Benedict and Franklin offer some cautions for parents:

In any case, do not hand down advice he is bound to follow. Work it out with him, a step at a time. Remarks like these will start him thinking: "Did you think of this?" or "I wonder about trying so and so," or "Paul was in that fix once, and he did so and so, and it worked out pretty well."²

Parents must always bear in mind the limited understanding of their children.

Parents and children have many things to talk about. Aside from matters which are beyond their understanding, or which would be a cause for anxiety, there is no aspect of their lives which parents cannot share with their children. (They should be told about various jobs, about advancements and increases in pay.) In Taylor's opinion,

Meal-times are often the family's most strategic opportunity for education through conversation. The family is

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1. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., pp. 43, 44.
2. Ibid., p. 43.

together as a group then more frequently than at any other time. Because of the pleasant informality of table talk and the social pleasure of eating together, the group is in a receptive mood, and incidental education is particularly effective.¹

2. Planning Together

For the past generation, Fiske maintains,² family discipline has proved to be a real problem. For most of human history, the father's will has been the law of the family, and the mother and children found that acquiescence was the best policy. Women were considered inferior to men, and children were to be seen and not heard. Today, many parents have gone to the other extreme, being determined to avoid parental monarchy, and have allowed their children unrestricted freedom to express themselves exactly as they please. A few homes, however, seeking to avoid both extremes, have developed into family democracies.

Although a family is not a complete democracy in the true sense of the word, this does not necessarily mean that any matters need be excluded from group discussions. The difference lies in the degree of responsibility which can be given to the various members of the family. As in any democracy, important matters which will affect all must be decided upon by all.³ Some families prefer a

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1. Tyler, op. cit., p. 206.

2. Cf. George Walter Fiske: The Christian Family, p. 54ff.

3. Cf. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 64.

more formal meeting, others an informal get-together. Discussions may happen on the spur of the moment or may be planned for a specific time.¹ Decisions made at such a meeting might include allowances and the way they are spent, responsibilities in the home, recreation for the family, the use of joint possessions such as the radio or the family automobile, the color of the new paper in the living room, and any disputes or other problems which have arisen.² Family conferences can solve many a hard problem. Talking things over with the attitude that this is "our" problem, not "yours", and leading the child into self-discipline is in the long run often the easiest course to follow. Conferences about complicated matters are also good. As the children grow they can be taken into confidence in plans for such things as finances and vacations. Mrs. Bacmeister feels that all problems must be approached with the same basic attitude:

This attitude comprises three assumptions: first, that differences of opinion are natural and to be respected; second, that we should meet contrary opinions not by contradiction, but by a genuine attempt to understand them and why the speaker holds them; third, that each must not want to win an argument or enforce his own point of view, but rather do his share toward finding a plan which will be acceptable to all, or toward arriving at a better understanding of all the factors involved in a problem.³

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1. Cf. Bacmeister, op. cit., p. 115.
2. Cf. Tyler, op. cit., p. 23.
3. Bacmeister, op. cit., p. 115.

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Benedict and Franklin¹ offer some concrete suggestions as to how to go about making the family conference an institution. They maintain that it is not wise to hold these conferences at regular times at the beginning, but to wait until something easy and pleasant comes along. This might be a party, a picnic, or a visit which the family will make together. Progress is wholly dependent upon the goals which the parents have in mind. There should be a definite attempt to achieve frankness of expression by both the children and the parents. Lectures about fairness should be avoided, but a sense of fair play encouraged by the example of the parents.

As the family gradually learns to work things out together, a subject may be selected for discussion which is a problem affecting everyone in the family. A discussion about the use of the radio or of serving Sunday breakfast will present a greater challenge to all. The compromises achieved at family conferences may be of small importance, but they are made willingly and with an understanding of the reason for them.

Gradually the family conference will become an institution and will become more organized as to time of meeting and more varied as to subjects discussed.

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1. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 67

3. Working Together

Housework has often been considered a necessary evil, and yet Benedict and Franklin go so far as to say that "families who emphasize the positive side of housework, and who make a cooperative job of it do not find that all of it is drudgery". They feel that some chores are interesting and that all of them offer some chance for fun and companionship as well as for work.¹ This sounds, of course, like an ideal situation and yet it apparently can be accomplished if one knows how to go about it. "Children should start quite young with small home responsibilities."² These responsibilities should be graded to the level of each child's development.³ Caring for their own belongings and keeping their rooms in order are the beginnings.⁴ However doing a service for others "is more friendly and brings richer rewards in thanks and a sense of importance."⁵ At about two years of age the child makes his first feeble attempts to imitate his mother while she is doing her housework. Obviously he is not much help, but if his efforts are encouraged, gradually he tries to do more and more. When the children become older and able to do more things, housework will become one of the things to be planned in the family discussion hour.

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1. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 76.
2. Bacmeister, op. cit., p. 69.
3. Percy and Myrtle Hayward, op. cit., p. 36.
4. Jean Schick Grossman; Life with Family, p. 135.
5. Bacmeister, op. cit., p. 69.

The first plan should be made on a trial basis, subject to change in order to suit everyone involved. Each person should be given a job or jobs for which he or she is definitely responsible. As much as possible the child should be allowed to do his own job the way he sees fit. The required result and the time of completion may be definitely set down, but method should be the choice of the child. So many children learn to hate housework, simply because everything has to be done in a certain way.¹

After the plan has been in operation for a while, the family will undoubtedly see faults and together will make changes. Again this plan is only tentative and always subject to change. Even when the plan seems to be working well, there are always times when members of the family will exchange jobs for convenience, or when everyone will lend a hand to do one person's job on a special occasion. Of course, no child is perfect, and therefore no plan will ever work perfectly, but "what helps most of all is the parents' faith in them . . . Warm praise for honest effort helps too."²

Again, Benedict and Franklin suggest:

Of course the family must never reach the point of allowing the schedule to run it. Sometimes, when you suddenly feel like going somewhere . . . leave the dishes in the sink and the dust on the furniture, and go out

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1. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 82.
2. Ibid., p. 85.

and have a good time!"¹

4. Celebrating Together

Holidays serve to some extent as guideposts in the year's total experience, and while they should be significant in the life of the family, nevertheless they should be so celebrated that they will be remembered with genuine satisfaction and not with a sigh of exhaustion. Here is something else to be discussed and planned for by the entire family.

One of the most important holidays for any child is his own birthday. This is one time, when as much as possible he should be allowed to plan the celebration in his own way. However, at the same time it is an occasion which may be enjoyed by all. Jane Mayer points out that "Some families 'spare father all the mess and worry.'² Others let him enjoy it too." Sometimes a child does not want a party, but prefers to visit a place of special interest to him, such as an automat or his father's office. Why not? All too often parents are tied down to convention.

Holidays and church festivals today often lose much of their real significance and meaning in riotous celebration. It is important that we go back to the origins of our holidays and remember why and for whom we are observing the

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1. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 86.

2. Mayer, op. cit., p. 10.

day.

How much more fun can be had on Valentine's Day when children know the story of the well-loved monk who, desiring to please God began giving his flowers, which he loved so well, to children, and making nosegays for shut-ins. Valentines can be made by the entire family and sent to shut-ins with this same spirit.

St. Patrick is so often remembered in terms of green snakes, shamrocks, tall hats or clay pipes. How much more meaningful this day would be if the children knew how he brought the message of Christianity to the people of¹ Ireland.

There are so many holidays which we celebrate during the year that it would be impossible to include each one. However, Christmas, of all days, is perhaps the most commercialized and yet has perhaps the most significance for us as Christians.

Dorothy Carl has written a most interesting description of Christmas:

Although Christmas is often to be found in kitchens, certain kinds of living rooms are a favorite haunt also, especially those where "homey" gifts and tree trimmings are being made or little creches set up by chubby fingers. It is found where parents and children are enjoying together the old, old story of the first Christmas, or of the transformation wrought by the magic of the Christmas spirit; or where families are gathered about the piano

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1. Mary Clemens Odell: Our Family Grows Toward God, p. 43.

singing carols of the shepherds, and boats sailing in on Christmas Day in the morning.¹

Truly Christmas is a family day, and should be planned by all and enjoyed by all. Setting up a Nativity scene can become a wonderful family tradition. Any Christmas tree takes on new significance if it is decorated with homemade ornaments. The same holds true with table decorations. What mother would not rather receive an unevenly sewed pot holder made especially for her, than a beautiful new scarf?

Christmas carols accompanied by members of the family who are learning to play instruments may in a beautiful way lead into the reading of the well-loved story of Christ's birth from the Bible. Christmas morning ushered in with carols will be something a child will never forget. "Uppermost in our family joy of celebrating Christmas should be the message of the peace and good will which the Christmas baby came to bring."²

5. Exploring Together

a. Investigating the Community

"Something hidden, go and find it,
Go and look behind the ranges,
Something lost behind the ranges,
Lost and waiting for you--go!"

Rudyard Kipling³

Exciting and interesting places and things to

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1. Dorothy Carl: The Family Celebrates Christmas, p. 4.
2. Odell: Our Family Grows Toward God, p. 52.
3. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 117.

explore lie not beyond the ranges, but right in the family's own community.¹ Exploring the community is not something the parents should do for the children; it is something they will love to do with the children. Benedict and Franklin record the oft-repeated remark of parents who have tried that very thing. "Why I never dreamed this town was so interesting till I started going around with the children."² Observing how people live, watching a steam-roller, becoming fascinated by a suspension bridge, deciding to look up the history of a certain monument all serve to awaken new interests and broaden experience.

b. Making Scientific Discoveries

A scientist has come to be typified as a man with vast stores of knowledge which are utterly unattainable by an ordinary human being. However, science can be as complex or as simple as one wishes to make it. In a broad sense everyone, even a small child, can be a scientist. Everyone can observe facts with his senses, classify these facts, and base conclusions on them. Benedict and Franklin tell of a two-year-old who watched his mother carry a hot plate with a pot holder. "When he found the cereal too hot he covered the dish with the holder and tried again. This was on his own childish level, a true scientific

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1. Cf. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 117.

2. Ibid., p. 118.

experiment."¹

Just as in the exploration of the community, scientific discovery can be enjoyed to the fullest degree when the entire family cultivates the habit of being observant. Noticing such things as the revolving wheels of the egg beater, the working of the stopper in the sink, the flight of a paper airplane, the frozen milk in the refrigerator, the way a small tree has split a rock in two, why some things float while others sink, and any number of other ordinary happenings, can draw the family together in a common search for knowledge.

However, it is not necessary to stop with observation. Much can be learned by experimenting with a magnet, setting up your own electric bell, or making homemade machines.²

c. Enjoying Nature

Nature, or the world of growing things of course, can never be separated from science as such, for actually, experiences with plants and animals provide one of the best and easiest ways of meeting a little child's first interest in science. It is only for the sake of convenience that these two have been separated here.

When adults think of a garden they think of planning,

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1. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 144.

2. Cf. Ibid., pp. 144-158.

planting and harvesting, and they are willing to wait for a future result, but a child has a much more immediate interest. His day by day experience is of far greater importance to him than some future harvest.¹ Several authors suggest that the child be given a small plot of earth for a garden of his own. He will probably show great interest for a few days, digging, planting and watering energetically. But then, very likely he will become interested in something else and forget all about the garden. It might be a good idea, because of the child's short-lived interest, to have quick growing plants, so that he may see results without waiting too long. Nagging a child who has neglected his garden is certain to discourage the very interest one wishes to encourage. This is the time for the child to feel the interest of the entire family. The interested father will say, "The weeds are getting big in my garden, let's go look at yours. I'll help you take out these big ones so your flowers will have more room to grow."² Interest will come back immediately, for gardening with one's father is the best of fun.

Outdoor gardens are not always possible, but there are many interesting ways to make an attractive indoor garden. One can plant a garden in an aquarium tank, a fish

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1. Garrison and Sheehy, op. cit., p. 191.

2. Ibid., p. 193.

bowl, a jar or a glass globe. Moss makes a good foundation, and all kinds of tiny plants may be planted around a miniature pool. Small animals such as frogs, toads, salamanders and miniature turtles will live quite comfortably in such surroundings and will furnish added interest.¹ Garrison and Sheehy offer many suggestions for variety in indoor planting. They suggest planting beets and turnips in a dish of pebbles, a half-inch of carrot (upper end) in a shallow dish of water, a sweet potato or an onion in a glass of water, grapefruit or pumpkin seeds in dirt. They also suggest window boxes and water gardens.²

Plants are not by any means the only growing things that interest children and adults. There is nothing more fascinating than association with various kinds of animals. Universal favorites are dogs and cats, but others such as rabbits, guinea pigs, chickens, ducks, a goat, lamb or pig, canaries and goldfish all afford many interesting experiences for the family. Other nature experiences such as watching frog eggs develop into tadpoles and then gradually into frogs, or watching a moth or butterfly emerge from a cocoon can be shared by the family. The interest of the parents will stimulate the already awakened interest of the child.³

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1. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 162.
2. Garrison and Sheehy, op. cit., pp. 195ff.
3. Ibid., pp. 198-200.

6. Creating Together

Benedict and Franklin claim that "Just as families say they are not scientists, so they say they are not artists."¹ What is art? Benedict and Franklin offer an interesting and unusual definition:

. . . it is that universal language through which members of families speak to one another when words fail. Man has used ¹it to express thought and emotion down through the ages.²

Authors are agreed that art is not something which can be imitated or forced. Rather the beginner, whether adult or child, must feel free to express himself without feeling great concern for the result. Benedict and Franklin express it in this way:

He must first of all have the chance to love the art by freely enjoying it--by singing, or experimenting with paint, clay, words--and in his own way, by appreciation of the works of others, but never by imitating.³

a. Painting: Modeling: Crafts

The capacity to paint is there, in the child. The parent need not worry in the least about this point; his concern is to bring it out.⁴

There are two necessary elements to remember in starting a child in painting. There must be freedom of the spirit. This does not mean freedom to destroy or waste, but freedom for a human personality to express itself in

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1. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 174.
2. Ibid., p. 173.
3. Ibid., p. 178.
4. Ibid., p. 185.

its own way. Secondly, there must be encouragement. The parents' warm acceptance of the young child's paintings, their praise of honest effort, send him onward. All authors consulted on this subject, recommended starting the three-year-old painting with a pail of water and a three-inch brush. He will enjoy painting a box, a board fence, or even the garden furniture in this fashion. As he learns to manage the brush he may be given one or more bright colors. It is necessary to take time to show children from the very beginning how to care for their materials. They can learn very young to wipe up spilled paint, then to wash their brushes, and by the time they are six, to do everything but pour the paint from large jars into smaller ones.¹

Skill in painting is something that comes only by a slow process of growth, with much encouragement. The active interest and understanding of the parents, as well as their help when needed is of far more importance than their supplying expensive paints.

It is not assumed from this discussion, that parents cannot have as much fun learning to paint as their children. What could be a greater incentive to a child than to be learning to paint along with his parents, who in many cases have very little skill? The whole family can paint together in the decoration of a playroom or bedroom.

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1. Cf. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 187.

Modeling in clay can begin as young as three years or possibly sooner.¹ At first the child will merely manipulate the clay, and then perhaps begin to make real things, which are actually little more than lumps of clay.² As he continues to gain in skill, many interesting objects may be made, such as bowls or tiles. As the entire family becomes interested in clay modeling, a much greater variety of objects will be desired. In such a case more facilities will be needed, such as a kiln, plaster bats to hold the objects as they dry, and a potter's wheel. Great fun can be had by the use of various colors.³

There could be an endless discussion on crafts for the family. Each member will have his own particular interest, but yet all can work together and encourage each other. Making all kinds of Christmas gifts adds great enjoyment to the entire season.

b. Story Telling and Reading

First stories are usually told without books. Stories help the child to clarify familiar experiences, enhance and deepen their meaning. For the youngest children the story may be told as it is taking place, such as getting dressed in the morning.⁴ Soon the child will demand a story about a picture, or will enjoy listening to one read from a

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1. Cf. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 193.
2. Cf. Garrison and Sheehy, op. cit., pp. 83-84.
3. Cf. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 195.
4. Cf. Perry, op. cit., p. 97.

book. Good stories give patterns which help the child to tell his own stories. As the child grows older, the whole family can enjoy reading together. Many children's books such as Winnie the Pooh are just as enjoyable to adults as to children. Perhaps one member of the family loves to read aloud. He should have an opportunity to read to the rest of the family. Some families set apart a time each week when they gather together to read.¹ Rainy days and vacations are also favorite times for reading together. To many adults today their happiest memories of their childhood home are the times when the family gathered together to read good books.

The suggestion of a winter evening, a pan of popcorn and mother or dad reading aloud is accompanied by poignant nostalgia.

In the the present day with the radio and so many other activities, perhaps not as many families have the custom of reading together.² It is a habit that may well be cultivated.

"You live in a Christian family today because of a Book."³ The Book of Books must not be left out of family reading. The Bible contains all kinds of literature, and in addition it contains the words of eternal life and the solutions to everyday problems. No better book could be read by the family.

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1. Cf. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 209.
2. I.C.R.E., op. cit., p. 5.
3. Irma Highbaugh: Source Book on Home and Family Life, p. 118.

c. Sharing Experiences in Music

Music has often been called the universal language, and surely its power to reach across barriers and to unite men is evident to anyone who has had any experience with it. For this reason "it is peculiarly the art of groups and, in particular, of the family. Parent and infant have been sharing musical experiences from the time the first mother sang a lullaby to her baby."¹

There is no need for parents to have any particular musical skill or training in order to introduce music successfully into their home.² The most obvious way for a family to increase their enjoyment of music is through the use of the radio. But, actually radio is not sufficient. A record player is as important as a radio, and allows more freedom for individual taste and discrimination.³

Listening to music together is a wonderful experience, but nothing can be compared with the joy of creating music. Singing can and should become an integral part of life itself. A mother, singing softly as she goes about her work, will soon hear her small child singing with her, and even improvising on his own.⁴

Singing grace at the table is a happy way of

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1. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 225.
2. Elizabeth McE. Shields: Music in the Religious Growth of Children, p. 121.
3. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 227.
4. Garrison and Sheehy, op. cit., p. 142.

expressing thanksgiving to God. Many good hymns of praise may be used in addition to the traditional graces.¹

Gathering around the piano to sing favorite hymns often becomes a tradition in the family. "Whistle While You Work" has good psychology behind it and can be suggested of singing as well. Work never seems so hard when all are working and singing together. The trip never seems so long or so tiring when singing games are played.² Ilisa May Mullens describes the Willingham home in which she found rest after the death of her son:

No more comforting refuge could have been found the world over. The quiet peace of the home, the underlying sympathy, the chastened good cheer were things to remember for a lifetime. A house which held nine children, ranging from the age of twenty-one to a year! How could such a household present the sweet refuge described? In the morning at the rising hour some young voice would softly start a song, another would catch it up a little more strongly, perhaps bringing in the alto tones, then another and another would add its chiming notes, bringing in a tenor or a bass, till from every corner of³ the house came the soft cadence of some lovely old hymn.

If two or more members of the family play musical instruments it is only natural for them to play together. Ensemble playing may be used also as accompaniment for family singing.⁴

d. Dramatics

Gertrude Hartman and Ann Shumaker express their

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1. I.C.R.E., op. cit., p. 7.
2. Ibid., loc. cit.
3. Quoted in Tyler, op. cit., p. 105.
4. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 228.

conception of the place of dramatic play in the life of the child thus:

In the spontaneous, imaginative play of an unspoiled child one may witness a perfect example of creative drama. And in the witnessing, one becomes convinced that dramatization is inherent in the child's nature, and impersonation an instinctive art.¹

With little children, drama is a game, played alone or with others, and not a performance. Mrs. Odell explains how playing stories helped her with her small son Dicky. Since there were no other children who lived nearby, it was often difficult to get Dicky to go out of doors and play.

But with his out-of-doors things imagined into a "beautiful little red coat and blue trousers, lovely little pair of purple shoes with crimson soles and crimson linings," and with an old umbrella for the "beautiful green umbrella," little Black Sambo could be induced to sally forth outdoors to look for tigers.²

As children become older, their attitude changes slightly, and they desire to "give plays". Children will enjoy playing their favorite stories for their parents or for guests. The role of the parent in this activity is that of supplying simple guidance when really needed, providing blankets, sheets, old hats, and a countless number of other essentials to say nothing of being an interested and encouraging audience.³

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1. Gertrude Hartman and Ann Shumaker, ed.: Creative Expression, p. 259.
2. Odell: Our Little Child Faces Life, p. 16.
3. Cf. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., pp. 243-246.

7. Playing Together

Naturally not all play interests can be shared, for each member of the family needs recreation suitable to his own development.¹ Nevertheless, playing together as a family is not only possible, but extremely profitable. Of course it is not much fun for father or mother to win all the time, so a family system of handicaps may be worked out, making it possible for everyone to play his very best. As children grow, sports are added to family fun. Such activities as swimming, boating, riding, roller skating, ice skating, and ball games of various kinds are only a few of the many things which may be enjoyed by the entire family.

Vacations are a splendid opportunity for families to do many things together which were impossible during the rest of the year. The family vacation should be planned by the entire family, taking into consideration the needs and desires of each member.² Going on a vacation does not necessarily involve excessive expenditures as Mrs. Odell so aptly explains in her chapter, "Vacation on a Shoestring."³ Making use of the ingenuity and creativity of the entire family will afford untold pleasure at little expense. Being together and learning to know each other better is of far greater importance than the particular location selected.

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1. Cf. Bacmeister, op. cit., p. 164.

2. Cf. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 267.

3. Odell: Our Family Grows Toward God, pp. 38-40.

8. Worshipping Together

It is recognized that Christianity cannot rightly be separated from life, nor can worship actually be separated from all other activities. Yet for the sake of description, distinctly Christian experiences of worship will be treated separately.

Fiske suggests that any program of home training in worship should include at least the following experiences for the child:

- 1) unconscious impressions from a worship environment
- 2) praying with father or mother
- 3) personal prayer habits started, using suggested prayers
- 4) a prayer desire aroused
- 5) original prayers encouraged
- 6) prayer experience explained and developed
- 7) sharing in the family worship¹

In his next chapter Fiske adds the importance of making the Bible a part of life. Each Christian life has its necessary personal aspect, and yet the family as a group can experience rich fellowship together in the presence of God.

Prayer need not be limited to the special times such as before meals or upon going to bed,² but rather it should be made clear that in any experience, whether it be one of joy, sorrow or need, God is interested in sharing it with us. The family which experiences such spontaneous prayer is drawn into an even closer fellowship with the

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1. Fiske, op. cit., p. 85.
2. Cf. Brown, op. cit., p. 41.

Father.

There is no set manner of having family devotions, but they should be a daily experience. Bible reading by one member of the family, followed by prayer is perhaps the most simple and basic form. A poem or hymn may be added if desired. Some families find a simple worship center to be helpful.¹ In any case it should be done, not through the sense of necessity, but through a desire for a closer walk with God. In Highbaugh's opinion "a discussion of daily problems, an attempt to solve them on a Christian level, and the experience of the power of prayer in daily life, all are priceless helps in daily Christian living."² If worship is to be of value to each individual, participation in worship by all members of the family is necessary.³

D. Evaluation of Family Group Activities
as a Means of Meeting the Needs of Growing
Christian Personality

In the first part of this chapter it was discovered that the basic needs of growing Christian personality are as follows: Security, growth toward independence, ability to get along with people, personal integrity and loyalty to ideals, and underlying all of these, a real and vital faith in God through Jesus Christ.

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1. Cf. Brown, op. cit., p. 42.
2. Highbaugh, op. cit., p. 79.
3. Cf. Ibid., p. 80.

The family group activities discussed in the second section of this chapter will now be evaluated in the light of these stated needs of growing Christian personality. Fiske's opinion is that:

Our youth must have true ideals of what it means to be a Christian, but unless these ideals are made flesh and live in human form, they have little power. It helps greatly to see these noble ideals perfectly incarnated in the life of Christ. But they need to be translated in terms of purely human living, in the very world in which our youth is living himself.¹

1. Conversing Together

Conversation is a splendid teaching opportunity.²

The family not only learn much in the way of information from the conversation of parents, but they assimilate basic attitudes. The daily conversation of parents with each other and with their children will reveal and transmit their attitude toward God and Jesus Christ. Talking things over with a child gives him reassurance of the interest of his parents, and thus a sense of security.

2. Planning Together

"Without counsel purposes are disappointed; but in the multitude of counsellors they are established."³ Planning together helps children learn how to think for themselves and to make decisions.⁴ It provides a sense of

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1. George W. Fiske: The Changing Family, p. 161.

2. Brown, op. cit., p. 57.

3. Proverbs 15:22.

4. Highbaugh, op. cit., p. 122.

security and of belonging".¹ "This helps to mature them. It develops their self-respect and manliness. It makes them more dependable."²

3. Working Together

"Working together with Him then . . ."³ When parents are so busy working by themselves that they are not willing to take time to let their children help, they deprive themselves and the children of the pleasure of achieving something together, and they fail to teach their children "the dignity, the necessity, and the satisfaction of efficient work."⁴ By doing this they are hindering the growth of their children toward independence and dependability.

Highbaugh states that:

working together is not only necessary for the building and carrying on of a Christian home. It is necessary for carrying on the kingdom of God.

"Christ has no hands but ours, with which to give this aid
No lives but ours with which to carry out his plans.
We say that we are his; we say that he is ours;
Deeds are the proof of that, not words--
and these the proving hours."

(Author unknown)

Training for this task begins at home with such ordinary duties as pulling weeds, washing dishes, hanging up clothes, making beds. There is more friendliness, and more restfulness in a home where each one does his part. Each learns to appreciate the other for being able to do a good job. No one has a chance to become lazy and

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1. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 74.
2. Fiske; The Christian Family, p. 58.
3. II Corinthians 6:1, R.S.V.
4. Highbaugh, op. cit., p. 116.

selfish if he is expected to do his share of family work.¹

4. Celebrating Together

Celebrating together gives the child a sense of belonging to the group, and hence a sense of security. In making preparations his creativity is challenged, and he is given an opportunity for self expression. Christian celebrations such as Christmas serve to deepen the child's love for God and faith in Jesus Christ.

5. Exploring Together

Exploring, whether it be in the community or in the realm of science or nature, arouses the child's innate curiosity. As he learns to understand the things around him, he becomes more at home in his world, and therefore a better adjusted personality.

6. Creating Together

a. Art: painting, modeling, and crafts

Parents cannot but sense the ways in which art expression is strengthening the personalities of children. A parent cannot measure this strengthening process externally, but he will inevitably realize that art experiences are at least partly responsible for the child's growing confidence and poise, his quickening esthetic sense, his more original approach to life. And, since very deep needs of his nature are being met, he will be more even-tempered, amiable, and co-operative.²

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1. Highbaugh, op. cit., p. 117.

2. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 181.

A child who has found a craft which he enjoys, has found a hobby which will help him to use his leisure time more profitably, and which will be a source of refreshment in times of stress.

But far more important, the craftsman will never lose the qualities his craft has built into his character, the initiative, ingenuity and confidence in his ability to solve problems, the habit of estimating a situation objectively, of criticizing his work honestly, admitting his mistakes and meeting obstacles and failure constructively.¹

b. Story Telling and Reading

The voice that reads holds the group together; it creates an invisible circle, within which are warmth and a sense of safety and security.²

Books give us strength to live by, knowledge to use, thoughts that are eternal; they stimulate and broaden sympathy for our fellow men.³

c. Sharing Experiences in Music

. . .⁴ singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.⁵

Music furnishes endless possibilities for a child to share in a family circle--in creativity, worship, entertainment, fun, knowledge, appreciation and good will. In singing folk songs of a nation we get a new sense of understanding its people. . .

Christianity undoubtedly has real use for music that stirs the best emotions.

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1. Bacmeister, op. cit., p. 160.
2. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., p. 203.
3. Ibid., p. 204.
4. Ephesians 5:19b
5. I.C.R.E., op. cit., p. 6.

Music can permeate the very atmosphere to suggest joy, sadness, quiet reverence, wonder, or a desire to be "about our Father's business." . . .

A language so universal, which aids social development, serves as a medium for conveying information, and, at the same time appeals to the emotions. . . .¹

d. Dramatics

Dramatics serves much the same purpose as the other arts, in that it provides opportunity for self expression.

But this is distinctive among the arts in that it permits expression through projection into living situations. . . .²
Portraying positive qualities helps you to attain them.

Drama has another definite contribution in that it helps to broaden appreciation and sympathy for fellow men.

7. Playing Together

. . . and a time to laugh.³

Playing together gives opportunity for both emotional and physical growth. It gives opportunity to learn fair play and good sportsmanship as well as to acquire various skills. Again the sense of security comes as the child finds a real place for himself in a game.

8. Worshipping Together

As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.⁴

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1. Shields, op. cit., p. 24.

2. Benedict and Franklin, op. cit., pp. 239-240. ✓

3. Ecclesiastes 3:4.

4. Joshua 24:15.

"Indeed it is worship" more than anything else, "that holds a family together."¹ When a father and mother have placed their trust in God and in His Son Jesus Christ, there is a unity in the family and a basic security which can be found nowhere else. Actually, the deep-rooted faith of a Christian family should permeate and be the basis of every aspect of life. This is the secret of a truly stable life.

E. Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to study the needs of growing Christian personality, to investigate various family group activities, and to evaluate these activities in the light of the stated needs. Books on family life, both secular and distinctively Christian were first analyzed and compared in order to discover the needs emphasized. These needs, as found stressed by the authors were: security, growth toward independence, ability to get along with people, personal integrity and loyalty to ideals, and fundamentally, a vital, living faith in God through Jesus Christ.

As a next step, these same books and other more specialized books were studied in order to discover the family group activities described as important. These activities were: conversing, planning, working, celebrating,

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1. Highbaugh, op. cit., p. 125.

exploring (investigating the community, making scientific discoveries, and enjoying nature), creating (Art: painting, modeling and crafts, story telling and reading, sharing experiences in music, and dramatics), playing, and worshipping.

These family group activities were then analyzed in light of the needs already discussed. It was discovered that the activities do meet the needs of growing Christian personality. For example, by conversing together in the family children assimilate basic attitudes toward God and Jesus Christ and life in general. Planning things together helps to develop in the children a feeling of security in the family as well as a sense of responsibility. Exploring together enables a child to become more familiar with the world in which he lives, thus helping him to develop into a better adjusted individual.

CHAPTER II

FAMILY GROUP ACTIVITIES AS SUGGESTED IN

THE PRESBYTERIAN NEW CURRICULUM

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A. Introduction

In order to discover the emphasis placed on the various family group activities in the Presbyterian New Curriculum, the Parent-Teacher magazines for the three lower age groups will be studied, namely, Growing, Opening Doors, and Discovery, intended respectively for Kindergarten, Primary, and Junior parents and teachers. The magazines studied will be those of the years 1948-49 and 1949-50. In addition to the degree of emphasis placed on each activity, study will be made of the different methods by which the suggested activities are brought to the attention of the parents.

B. Family Group Activities Emphasized

In the study of these magazines it was discovered that every one of the activities studied in chapter one is included in some form or other. It was observed that three activities are consistently suggested or mentioned in every magazine on each age level. These most emphasized activities are conversing, reading, and worshipping. The following chart indicates the proportion of emphasis placed upon each

FAMILY GROUP ACTIVITIES as found in the PRESBYTERIAN NEW CURRICULUM

MAGAZINE ACTIVITY	GROWING Kindergarten								OPENING DOORS Primary								DISCOVERY Junior							
	I-1	I-2	I-3	I-4	II-1	II-2	II-3	II-4	I-1	I-2	I-3	I-4	II-1	II-2	II-3	II-4	I-1	I-2	I-3	I-4	II-1	II-2	II-3	II-4
Conversing	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Planning	X	X		X		X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X
Working	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X			X			X				X
Celebrating	X	X		X	X	X			X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Investigating the Community	X	X		X				X		X	X	X	X					X		X	X	X	X	
Making Scientific Discoveries								X										X		X		X	X	X
Enjoying Nature	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
Painting				X		X		X				X	X			X					X			X
Modeling						X		X						X										X
Crafts	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Story Telling and Reading	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sharing Experiences in Music	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Dramatics		X		X			X	X	X	X		X				X				X			X	X
Playing	X		X	X			X	X	X		X	X		X		X	X	X		X		X	X	X
Worshipping	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Roman Numerals indicate Volume

Arabic Numerals indicate Issue

of the activities. Music ranks second highest in emphasis, being suggested in seven out of eight magazines in each age group. Crafts rank third, with a slight increase indicated after the Kindergarten level. As the age increases, the emphasis on working together decreases greatly, while that on enjoying nature decreases slightly. At the Kindergarten and Primary level, explorations in the realm of science are barely mentioned, but at the Junior level there is a decided increase in emphasis. Celebrating shows a slight increase with each age level. The method of presentation of these activities will now be discussed in the order in which they appeared in Chapter One.

C. Method of Presentation

Throughout the magazines, family group activities are presented in a variety of ways. These will now be considered in relation to each activity in turn.

1. Conversing Together

Frequently simple suggestions for conversing together are given in the special section for parents at the close of the lesson. For example in Growing the following suggestions are made: "Share with all adult members of the family the child's own experiences and ideas in family conversation," and "It's fun to talk over and

practice such acts (courtesies)."¹ In addition to such simple suggestions, occasional articles such as "How Deeply Do Little Children Think?"² help parents better to understand how to answer the questions of their children. The article, "Stop! Men at Work"³ advises parents of Junior boys and girls in thinking and talking about vocations with their children. "Answering Children's Questions"⁴ offers suggestions for sex education. Another type of article, "I Wish I Could. . ."⁵ is helpful in assisting children to talk naturally about religion. "Now Tell Me All About It"⁶ offers in story form a method of helping children to express themselves.

2. Planning Together

Planning together is actually an integral part of all other family group activities. For example, the family plans together for holidays, vacations, budgets, and any number of other activities. These various aspects of planning will be discussed in relation to each specific activity. In "A Message to the Home" in Growing⁷ it is pointed out to Primary parents that they "should take their children

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1. Growing, (Oct.-Dec. 1948), p. 29.
2. Growing, (Jan.-March 1949), p. 3-4.
3. Discovery, (Jan.-March 1949), p. 3-4.
4. Growing, (April-June 1949), p. 8-9, 17.
5. Opening Doors, (Jan.-March 1949), p. 11.
6. Growing, (Apr.-June 1949), p. 15-17.
7. Growing (Jan.-March 1950), p. 33.

into their confidence and let them have a part in the planning and doing."

3. Working Together

Brief suggestions as to how children can help around the home are most frequent throughout the magazines. For example, "How about having your child help in your regular baking, and planning with him to take some cookies, or rolls, or a fruit tart to a shut-in in your neighborhood?"¹ More complete suggestions are offered in articles, such as "Everyday Jobs for Kindergarten Children".² "Jobs For Juniors"³ is narrated "As seen by the mother of three girls" and "As seen by the mother of three boys." A personal account of "Summer Schedules"⁴ shows how one mother solved the problem of sharing the housework. "Their Day Off"⁵ shows how another mother utilized her knowledge of psychology in helping her family to "pull together in happy unity, with each doing his part. . . ." The story entitled "Family Fun"⁶ indicates how housekeeping can be fun when everyone helps.

4. Celebrating Together

Just as there are many aspects to any celebration of a holiday, so there are many approaches to be made in the

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1. Opening Doors, (Jan.-March 1949), p. 56.
2. Growing, (Jan.-March 1949), p. 18-19.
3. Discovery, (Oct.-Dec. 1948), p. 12-13.
4. Opening Doors, (Apr.-June 1949), p. 4.
5. Discovery, (July-Sept. 1950), p. 10.
6. Growing, (Jan.-March 1949), p. 52-53.

way of suggestions for celebrating as a family. In Opening Doors there is a suggested Christmas Eve Service for the Home.¹ On the other hand in Growing, the discussion of Christmas celebration, "Holiday Time for the Young Child",² includes "Things to Hear", "Things to See", and "Things to Do." Books are also listed on the same page for further reading on the subject.

Easter, too, has various aspects to it. Growing presents a discussion on the meaning of Easter to the Kindergarten child in the article "When Easter Comes."³ Again, in Opening Doors a full page is devoted to "Things to Do at Easter Time."⁴

Birthdays are important holidays, and therefore it is suggested that in addition to the celebration of their own birthdays, children should be encouraged to have a share in "taking special note of birthdays and other occasions on which . . . older members of the family are honored."⁵

5. Exploring Together

a. Investigating the Community

People are a vital part of any community, and

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1. Opening Doors, (Oct.-Dec. 1948), p. 58.
2. Growing, (Oct.-Dec. 1948), p. 6-7.
3. Growing, (Jan.-March 1949), p. 56.
4. Opening Doors, (Jan.-March 1949), p. 57.
5. Growing, (Oct.-Dec. 1948). p. 33.

this is where the Presbyterian New Curriculum begins with the Kindergarten child. In a message to parents it is suggested that families "take time to list all the people who in some way serve you--storekeeper, doctor, delivery boy, milkman, postman, policeman, minister, teacher, fireman."¹ It is suggested that the child be introduced to such helpers and that he be encouraged to find ways of helping them. In the same magazine there is a warning to parents who are unconsciously passing on racial or national prejudices to their children through their own actions or through their speech.² Again, in the same magazine a visit to a farm or a dairy is suggested.³

At the Primary level, the community horizon is broadened to include other countries. Opening Doors includes a poem⁴ to be used by the family in thinking about the national background of the various people in their community.

The Juniors and their parents are led to think about migrant workers and the kind of life they lead.⁵

b. Making Scientific Discoveries

Little attention is paid to scientific discovery in the New Curriculum magazines. However, it is interesting

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1. Growing, (Oct.-Dec. 1948), p. 33.
2. Ibid., p. 42.
3. Ibid., p. 48.
4. Opening Doors, (Jan.-March 1949), p. 38.
5. Discovery, (Oct.-Dec. 1949), p. 8-9.

to note that in a list of toys for pre-school children¹ there is included a section for scientific experiences. This list includes such things as lightweight magnets, prisms, rubber hose, pulleys, magnifying glass, and flashlight.

In the material for the Junior age, science experiences are mentioned as being important:

A junior needs to get acquainted with the fact that the most effective power is quiet. Thunder roars, but the lightning has already struck!

This is a wonderful chance for Dad to try his hand at Christian education--to show that a lever or fulcrum is more powerful than a hammer, a Diesel engine than roaring steam. . . . Help your child to see the wonder of God's quiet power.²

c. Enjoying Nature

The enjoyment of nature is greatly emphasized at the Kindergarten level. "A Child's Garden"³ helps parents to understand how a garden can be valuable not only from the standpoint of enjoyment, but also in the learning and maturing process. That nature is an important part of Christian education is clearly revealed in the article, "Stand Still and Think of the Wonders of God."⁴ Opening Doors offers suggestions for sharing out-of-door experiences

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1. Growing, (July-Sept. 1950), p. 9.
2. Discovery, (July-Sept. 1950), p. 57.
3. Growing, (Jan.-March 1949), p. 5.
4. Growing, (Jan.-March 1949), p. 8.

as a family.¹ "The Earth is the Lord's"² explains how children and adults all over the world are able to give to the church through raising various crops.

6. Creating Together

a. Art: Painting, Modeling, Crafts

A finger-painting party for adults at which parents discuss the possibilities of painting with the whole family, is described in Growing.³ "The Children's Art Shelf"⁴ is intended to help adults be more understanding and appreciative of their children's creations. Discovery offers additional suggestions for finger painting.⁵

The use of clay is merely suggested in one issue of Growing,⁶ whereas another⁷ includes directions for "Clay Modeling." In Opening Doors⁸ detailed directions are given for modeling hand puppets from paper-mâché.

Crafts are introduced in numerous ways. Mere suggestions such as that of making Christmas gifts⁹ or a crêche are frequent. In Growing there is a full-page pattern for the making of a "Tuliptine",¹⁰ a valentine in

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1. Opening Doors, (July-Sept. 1950), p. 7.
2. Discovery, (Jan.-March 1949), p. 6-7.
3. Growing, (July-Sept. 1949), p. 10.
4. Growing, (Jan.-March 1950), p. 8-9.
5. Discovery, (Oct.-Dec. 1949), p. 10.
6. Growing, (Jan.-March 1950), p. 1-10.
7. Growing, (July-Sept. 1949), p. 52.
8. Opening Doors, (Jan.-March 1950), p. 7.
9. Growing, (Oct.-Dec. 1948), p. 7.
10. Growing, (Jan.-March 1949), p. 20.

in the form of a tulip. Opening Doors¹ offers numerous detailed instructions for "Holiday Handcrafts" at both Thanksgiving and Christmas.

b. Story Telling and Reading

In every magazine, books are suggested for reading by parents, by children, and by parents and children together. In some cases book reviews are given. The results of the interest of parents in the reading of their children are described in Opening Doors.² Frequently, lists of books for special occasions are listed.³ Junior parents are requested to read with their children a book which correlates with the Sunday School lessons.⁴ Reading the Christmas story together is suggested in each fall issue and a special discussion of "Fireside Reading for Christmas"⁵ is included in the Junior magazine. "Read to Me" is a mother's report of how she used the Bible with her small children.⁶

c. Sharing Experiences in Music

Articles on music appear in every magazine except one at each age level. The importance of hearing and making music in the life of the child is indicated in "They

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1. Opening Doors, (Oct.-Dec. 1948), pp. 15-16.
2. Ibid., p. 11.
3. Growing, (Oct.-Dec. 1948), p. 7.
4. Discovery, (Oct.-Dec. 1948), pp. 27, 32.
5. Ibid., p. 18.
6. Growing, (Jan.-March 1949), p. 14.

Shall Have Music."¹ Some actual songs for Kindergarten are included in the same issue.² "Making Music" claims that "Music is a natural part of a child's life."³ It tells about various types of musical experiences, including the construction and use of home-made instruments.

d. Dramatics

No articles on dramatics as such have been included in the magazines. Nevertheless some practical suggestions are offered to parents. For example in "The Children's Toy Shop,"⁴ it is suggested that materials for housekeeping--cleaning, washing and ironing, and clothes for dressing up be provided for children's play. Opening Doors suggests in a message to parents⁵ that the children might like to act out ways of living in Palestine, in connection with their Sunday School lessons. Puppets, as a means of dramatizing Bible stories, are described in Discovery.⁶ Growing⁷ shows how puppets can be a great source of enjoyment for the entire family.

7. Playing Together

"Go Play Dear"⁸ not only shows how necessary it

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1. Growing, (Oct.-Dec. 1949), p. 20.
2. Ibid., p. 21.
3. Growing, (July-Sept. 1949), p. 55.
4. Growing, (July-Sept. 1950), p. 9.
5. Opening Doors, (Oct.-Dec. 1948), p. 38.
6. Discovery, (July-Sept. 1950), p. 33.
7. Growing, (July-Sept. 1949), p. 6.
8. Ibid., pp. 5-6.

is for parents and children to play together, but offers many practical suggestions as to what can be done. Junior parents are reminded that "shared fun is essential to good family life,"¹ and they are given a few brief suggestions such as making their own games, or having a taffy pull.

8. Worshipping Together

Suggestions for family worship are included with each week's lesson. Additional suggestions, such as how one family started to have family worship² are sometimes included. "Prayer that is Real"³ is intended to help parents in their own personal prayer life, as well as assist them in teaching their children to pray. "The Devotional Use of the Bible"⁴ helps to give parents insight into the purpose of reading the Bible.

D. Summary

It was discovered in the study of family group activities suggested in the New Curriculum Magazines, Growing, Opening Doors, and Discovery, for the years 1948-49 and 1949-50, that all of the activities studied in Chapter One are included in one form or another. Conversing, reading and worship are the three activities suggested in every

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1. Discovery, (Oct.-Dec. 1948), p. 5-6.
2. Discovery, (July-Sept. 1950), p. 28.
3. Discovery, (April-June 1949), p. 3.
4. Opening Doors, (July-Sept. 1950), p. 16-17.

magazine on every age level. The other activities in their order of emphasis are: music; crafts; nature; planning and celebrating; working and playing; investigating the community; dramatics; painting; science; and modeling.

These activities are presented throughout the magazines in a variety of ways. Some are simply suggested, while others are described in detail. Some are incorporated in the form of a story, and others written from personal experience by parents. In addition to regular articles there are lists of books suggested for further reading.

CHAPTER III

A SUGGESTED FAMILY PROGRAM FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH

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A. Introduction

In the foregoing chapters, consideration was given first to the needs of growing Christian personality and to the family group activities which help to meet those needs. Secondly, the parent-teacher magazines of the Presbyterian New Curriculum were studied and the discovery was made that all of the activities considered in Chapter One are included in one form or another. However, it remains evident to even the most casual observer, that mere inclusion in a magazine does not in any way insure the utilization of suggestions in the actual home situation. It is the responsibility of the church to see to it that these activities are initiated and that families are given opportunities to do things together, in the hope that they will recognize the importance of such activities and will desire to continue them in their own homes.

It is therefore the purpose of this chapter to offer suggestions for a family program in the church for the period of one year. Specific programs for the year will be considered first, followed by the more general or

continuous aspects of the work.¹

B. A Year's Calendar for Family Programs in the Church

October

Rally Day (to be held in the evening instead of morning)

Purpose: To help the entire family to feel themselves a part of the Sunday School program

To lead parents to recognize the importance of family group activities and of their role in the Christian education of their children

To give families an idea of what other families are doing in order that they may desire to try the same or other activities in their own home

To create a feeling of oneness in the church family

Program: Program by the Sunday School children

Children to go with teachers into another room while the Pastor speaks to parents on the importance of family group activities and gives some suggestions

Family activities to be shared and suggested by means of demonstration by several families

Refreshments

Sing

Devotions led by a family

Hallowe'en Party (for the whole church)

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1. Helpful suggestions were obtained from:
Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Board of Christian Education, Dept. of Adult Work, "Parent Education and Christian Family Life in the Local Church,"

American Baptist Publication Society, Division of Education in Home, Church and Community, Dept. of Adult Work and Family Life, "Family Night Program Suggestions."

November

Harvest Festival

Purpose: To create within each family a feeling of
"we-ness"

To show parents how to have family devotions

To help each family to have fun together as
a family

To stimulate parents to initiate family
group activities in their home

To lead the family into an experience of
real thankfulness to God

Program: One or two families seated at each table
Each family to bring their own silver and
dishes
Covered dish supper

The blessing to be offered by one family as
it is in their home

Family devotions led by one family (as they
are seated around the table, or after leav-
ing the tables), planned by the family as
done, or as should be done, in their home
Emphasis on Thanksgiving

A period of children's games
Adults also taking part, families staying
together

A brief film on family life of interest to
children as well as adults

Closing hymn and prayer

December

Christmas Pageant

To include the presentation of White Gifts, a family
project

January

Open House at the Parsonage

A general family social, lasting from two o'clock in the afternoon until six-thirty in the evening

No planned program as such, but occasional musical numbers by various members of the church

February

Indoor Church Picnic

Program: Picnic supper in the church

Group singing

Chalk-Talk Artist

March

Family Night in the Church

Families working on crafts together according to interest
All crafts to be centered around one Bible story
Some suggested crafts are: finger painting, clay modeling, frieze, diorama, or peep box

Refreshments

Family devotions led by one family

April

All Church Night

Every organization in the church to be responsible for presenting in dramatic form some aspect of their program during the year

May

National Family Week

A special emphasis on the home and the family

Suggestions for each day to be placed in the hands of the parents to be used or supplemented as desired

Wednesday--a special Family Night in the church, with families sharing their experiences

Second Sunday--Family Tea at the church, including further sharing of experiences and a family dedication service

All Church Retreat

The whole church spending a Friday night and Saturday together at some convenient conference or camp grounds

Purpose: To become more united as a church family

To think through again their responsibilities as individual families and as a church family

June

Family Day Camp

To take the place of the annual Sunday School picnic

A varied program including crafts, singing, and skits or stunts with a camp fire vesper service as a climax

Emphasis to be placed on attendance by the whole family

C. Suggestions Supplementary to the Regular Planned Programs of the Church

In addition to the regular planned programs in the church, there are other aspects of family education that should continue throughout the year. These are often basic as a means of securing participation in family programs sponsored by the church.

A pre-Sunday-School program is of great importance. Pastoral visitation, both before and immediately after the

birth of a child, the presentation of suitable literature to the parents, the recognition of the birth by a card, a rose in church, and a certificate of membership in the cradle or nursery roll, all help the parents to realize that the church is interested in them and in their children. Dedication of parents along with the dedication of the child can be meaningful and helpful. Thus, from the very beginning parents should be led to understand their part in the Christian education of their children. The First Presbyterian Church in Germantown, Philadelphia, has instituted a "Creeper-Sleeper" room in their Sunday School. This room is well staffed with a registered nurse and adequately equipped with diapers, pins, powder, baby beds, and play-pens. In such a set-up the parents of even the tiniest babies are enabled to go to church and to feel themselves a part of the church family.

A Home Department in which mothers get together regularly to talk over problems and experiences is invaluable. Thus the church contacts the family at the very beginning and then follows it through as the children grow up. Parent-Teacher meetings in the Sunday School help the parents to understand better what the church is doing for their family and what their job is as parents. Speakers who are trained in family relations are a valuable asset to such meetings.

Missionary banks, kept on the dining room table

as a center of family interest, and returned three times a year to the church, are an incentive not only for giving regularly, but also for praying for missionaries regularly as a family.

When the time comes for the child to join the church, the whole family should be led to recognize the significance of such an occasion. Parents should stand with their child, and should be led to see that their responsibility is not yet over, but rather, greater.

Often it is difficult to interest parents in the Christian education of their children. Not a few parents of Sunday School children never attend any of the church functions. Even a visit by the pastor or Sunday School teacher is often of no avail. A different plan might include visitation by parents themselves in the hopes of interesting other parents, one family calling for another and standing by them during the meeting, thus helping to make them feel at home.

A Calendar for a Christian Home might include suggestions for family group activities for each month of the year.¹ Special worship services for the home on important days such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Day and Easter can be placed in the hands of parents.²

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1. Appendix A.
2. Appendix B.

In this way families which have had no experience in worshipping together as a group are aided in beginning such a practice. The services given to them may include familiar hymns, scripture, prayer and meditation. Each member of the family should be encouraged to take part either individually or as a part of the group.

D. Summary

Because of the fact that even the best written suggestions for family group activities are not automatically introduced into the home, this chapter has been written for the purpose of suggesting a possible program through which the church may stimulate parents to carry out such family activities. A year's calendar of specific programs in the church was first suggested and described. This was followed by suggestions of other activities which should be carried on continually throughout the year. This section included pastoral visitation, interest in and information for families with new babies, special occasions such as the dedication of children, joining the church, and the provision of good literature for the home.

GENERAL SUMMARY

GENERAL SUMMARY

As a preliminary step in the first chapter, a study was made of the needs of growing Christian personality. The three basic needs as indicated by all authors studied were security, growth toward independence, and ability to adjust to other people. Books written from the Christian standpoint went further in stating that loyalties and standards are important, and that even more fundamental is a sound faith in Jesus Christ.

Further, a study was made of various family group activities, selected according to their common emphasis by the authors studied. The activities discussed were conversing, planning, working, celebrating, investigating the community, making scientific discoveries, enjoying nature, painting, modeling, crafts, story telling and reading, sharing experiences in music, dramatics, playing, and worshipping. These activities were then evaluated in light of the needs already stated. It was discovered that these activities did meet the basic needs of growing Christian personality.

In the second chapter the findings resulting from the study of the parent-teacher magazines of the Presbyterian New Curriculum were reported. All of the activities described in chapter one were found in these magazines

either in the form of simple suggestions, articles, personal testimonies of parents, or as stories.

Inasmuch as inclusion in a magazine does not insure utilization in the home, a program for the church was developed in chapter three with the purpose in mind of initiating these activities in the home. The program was divided into two general aspects. The first included the actual programs which might take place in the church during the year in which the whole family would participate, and in which the various family group activities would be both suggested and experienced.

The second aspect of the program included basic procedures which would tend to promote family participation in the church program, such as pastoral visitation, distribution of good literature to the home, arousing of missionary interest through family banks, and recognition of special occasions such as the birth and dedication of children, and joining the church. In all of these the whole family can be made to sense their unity and responsibility in the personality development of each individual.

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

A YEAR'S CALENDAR FOR A CHRISTIAN HOME*

September

1. Visit new neighbors, inviting them to church and Sunday School.
2. Take neighbors to Sunday School.
3. Invite your child's Sunday School teacher to have dinner in your home.

October

1. Attend the Hallowe'en party in the church as a family.
2. Assemble a box of winter clothing for personal distribution by a community agency.
3. Help organize a garden club to beautify the church property, preparing flower beds, and arranging plant bulbs.

November

1. Assemble a basket of provisions for some needy family at Thanksgiving.
2. Invite some lonely person into your home for Thanksgiving Day.
3. Attend Thanksgiving services as a family.

December

1. Invite the pastor and his family to your home for dinner.
2. Cooperate as a family in decorating your home for Christmas, delegating responsibility for the tree, greens, candles, and lights.
3. Make your own manger scene, using clay or clothespins for figures.
4. Conduct a home worship service on Christmas Eve.
5. Plan as a family what you will give as your "White Gifts".

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* Adapted from Northern Baptist Convention, Board of Education and Publication, Dept. of Adult Work and Family Life, "A Year's Calendar for a Christian Home."

January

1. Have daily family worship.
2. Conduct an "inventory session" to determine how the family has grown in its love for each other, in its appreciation of the church, in its sensitiveness to the needs of others, and in its stewardship of time and money.
3. Hold "open house" for friends and neighbors.

February

1. Ask God's blessing at every meal.
2. Make the acquaintance of a family of some other nationality or race. Invite them into your home. Invite them also to the picnic supper at church, calling for them and sitting with them.

March

1. Attend church services regularly as a family.
2. Make family plans for a self-denial Easter offering for some cause needing Christian support.

April

1. Plan a Family-at-Home Night for family fun, fellowship, and worship.
2. Make friends with newcomers to your church.
3. Plant a flower garden, dedicating the flowers for church use and for distribution to shut-ins.

May

1. Organize a Family Council to discuss family problems and plans.
2. Celebrate Mother's Day as an anniversary in the home.
3. Take an active part in National Family Week.

June

1. Celebrate Father's Day as an anniversary in the home.
2. Invite some family without a car to accompany you on a pleasure ride.
3. Deliver bouquets of flowers to the sick, or to shut-ins.

July

1. Arrange a family picnic, ending it with family worship out-of-doors.
2. Make visits to places of special interest such as historic churches or mission centers.
3. Cooperate with your church in the vacation church school by attending and by giving leadership.

August

1. As a family spend your vacation together. Attend a family camp in which there is opportunity to live, play, work, and worship together.

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

FAMILY WORSHIP SUGGESTIONS FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS

1. Thanksgiving

Read together Psalm 100.

Discuss as a family the things you have to be thankful for.

Have prayer together, each member taking part, in which you thank God for His goodness to you.

Sing together, "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow".

2. Christmas

Christmas is a Christian festival, but commercial interests have made such inroads upon it that Christian parents find it hard to make it a truly spiritual experience for themselves and their children. Perhaps in this simple way this Christmas may become the means of spiritual growth to you and your family.

Just before you or the children are ready for bed on Christmas Eve:

1. Light the enclosed little red candle (it is more effective when you turn out the electric lights), and, as you watch the light shining in the darkness,
2. Read together the story of the first Christmas as it is found in Luke 2:8-18; then
3. Pray together the Lord's prayer; and
4. Sing together Luther's lovely carol, "Away in a Manger", or "Silent Night."¹

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1. Christmas Eve Ceremonial, The Brentwood Presbyterian Church, Brentwood, New York.

3. New Year's Day¹

Sometime during the evening, preferably just before midnight, call together the family or the circle of friends for this service. Let it be conducted with dignity and sincerity. Assign the scripture readings to several of the group.

Hymn of Worship (This may be read by the leader or sung by the group)

O God, our help in ages past
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home!

Under the shadow of thy throne
Still may we dwell secure;
Sufficient is Thine arm alone,
And our defense is sure.

Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting Thou art God,
To endless years the same.

O God our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come;
Be Thou our guide while life shall last
And our eternal home!

Worship and Thanksgiving: Psalm 95:1-7

A Prayer for Forgiveness: Psalm 51:1-10

A Hymn

Saviour, like a shepherd lead us,
Much we need Thy tender care;
In Thy pleasant pastures feed us,
For our use Thy folds prepare:
Blessed Jesus, Blessed Jesus!
Thou hast bought us, Thine we are.

We are Thine, do Thou befriend us,
Be the guardian of our way;
Keep Thy flock, from sin defend us,

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1. Gordon Hermanson, A Service for New Year's Eve.

Seek us when we go astray:
Blessed Jesus, Blessed Jesus!
Hear, O hear us when we pray.

Petition and Intercession

Jesus said, "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." Therefore, "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Let there be several moments of silent prayer and let each one pray for personal needs, for loved ones present, and for loved ones who are absent.

Words of Assurance: Psalm 91 and Psalm 23 (read in unison)

Hymn of Consecration

I am Thine, O Lord, I have heard Thy voice
And it told Thy love to me;
But I long to rise in the arms of faith,
And be closer drawn to Thee.

Consecrate me now to Thy service, Lord,
By the power of grace divine;
Let my soul look up with a steadfast hope,
And my will be lost in Thine.

Refrain: Draw me nearer, nearer blessed Lord,
To the cross where Thou hast died;
Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer blessed Lord,
To Thy precious bleeding side.

The Lord's Prayer (in unison)

The Doxology: Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below,
Praise Him above ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Benediction

Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling,
and to present you faultless before the presence of

His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and evermore. Amen.

4. Easter

Sing together "Low in the Grave He Lay".

Read together the Easter story as found in Matthew 28.

Think together about the new life which is yours because Christ rose from the dead, and talk over various ways in which you can share your joy with others.

Thank God for Jesus Christ and for his promise, "Lo I am with you always."

Sing together "Christ the Lord is Risen Today".

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