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Christian Life Bulletin

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April

Use It

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY A Christian Life Conference

File It

We dedicate this issue of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE BULLETIN to the Christian home. The entire issue is devoted to a suggested program for the study and discussion of some of the vital questions relating to MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY. All of the material offered here or any part of it can be used by churches or their departmental groups during CHRISTIAN HOME WEEK, or it may be adapted for use later in the year for a week's emphasis by a church or group of churches in both urban and rural communities.

Suggestions For Advance Preparations

1. **Planning.** A thorough analysis of the plans and purpose of the Conference should be made at a meeting of the teachers and officers of the Sunday School. Or, if possible, it would be well to call for a special meeting of all of the Deacons and church officers. In this way the leadership of the entire church can be acquainted with the plans and objectives of the Conference.

2. **Publicity.** Announcements should be made in the church bulletin and weekly paper, in opening assemblies, and on bulletin boards. Children in the elementary departments can prepare invitations to be taken home to their parents. A letter from the pastor to all the families in the Sunday School is desirable two weeks in advance of the Conference.

3. **Registration.** Registration Day should be set at least one week in advance in the Sunday School and Training Union. At this time those who register for the Conference may obtain their books or pamphlets which can be read prior to the beginning of the forums. It should be explained that these books will not be studied during the course as is usually done. Rather, they will be used for the purpose of laying a foundation and to stimulate questions which should then be brought up for discussion in the forums.

The pastor will find this registration quite useful. He will be able to make suggestions to those whom he knows are confronted with problems as to which group will benefit them most. He will further know from the registration and from his experience in pastoral counseling those people who have not registered but who ought to take advantage of the week. Thus he will have a full week between registration and the actual beginning of the Conference to advise and counsel with his people in relation to their personal needs.

4. **Departmental programs.** Departmental superintendents should be asked to prepare special programs for presentation on the opening Sunday of the Conference. These programs should deal with the theme of the Home and the Family.

Leadership Personnel

The leadership is perhaps the most vital aspect of the Conference. The committee in charge of preparations will have to exercise careful judgment in its selections. The first prerequisite for the leaders will be that they possess Christian character. It would be tragic indeed for any person thus selected to presume to speak as a Christian while at the same time, by personal conduct and ideals, to show himself otherwise.

It should be understood at the time of the enlistment of the personnel that the services requested cannot be compensated by an honorarium. It is expected, however, that any traveling expense will be taken care of by the church. A gracious gesture of appreciation can be made through some small useful gift to those who give their time in service.

It is entirely possible that all of the suggested leadership personnel may not be available in every local situation. Changes in the program are always possible in order to compensate. To meet certain specific needs with informed advice, however, it might well be worth while to ask someone to travel even a considerable distance in order to participate. It should also be noted that these specialists do not participate every night, but only one or two nights for the most part. Several ministers can be used as the outline suggests.

For your panel and group discussions professional people from the following list will give authentic information and dependable advice:

Ministers
Leaders in Religious Education
Representative woman—a mother
Physician
Psychiatrist
Lawyer
Social worker
Superintendent of Education
Teacher of Home Economics
Sociologist
Youth leader

GROUP DIVISIONS

The following groups are suggested for the Conference; they are determined by the individual's area of interest rather than the conventional criteria of age, sex, etc.

1. Children's Hour. This group is a necessary and essential part of the Conference so that parents can attend the forums of their choice. The conduct of this group will be left completely to the discretion of the local church. It may be a study course, a story hour, or handwork period.

2. Dating and Courtship. Young people of various ages will comprise this group. It is possible that for some discussions the boys and girls might meet separately. This division would be determined entirely by the group itself and the subjects under consideration.

3. Preparation for Marriage. This group will be reserved for the couples who are approaching marriage. While

it is not a prime prerequisite that they be engaged, some care should be taken to restrict this group to those whose immediate interest qualifies them for the study of preparation for marriage.

4. Adjustments in Early Marriage. It is a fact today that the largest number of divorces occur in the third year of marriage. One cannot draw too many dogmatic conclusions from this evidence but it is quite certain that the first three or four years of marriage are crucial years of adjustment between husband and wife. In this group such adjustments will be discussed.

5. Problems of the Expanding Family. With the coming and development of children in the home, the family is thrust into new areas of adjustment. Distinctive relationships emerge and with them are problems to be solved and decisions to be made. The objective of this group will be to meet the

needs thus created by the growth of the family.

6. Adjustment of the Contracting Family. Few couples are ever fully prepared for the rather sudden adjustments that are necessary when the children leave home and the climacteric or change of life begins. This group should be attended by those who are approaching this period as well as those already involved in the processes of a contracting and changing family relationship.

7. The Unmarried. For many and varied reasons some people do not marry. They are often forgotten in the emphases such as are given in a conference like this. They, too, face problems. They, too, need the counsel of the church. If there are those who are interested in such a group, then provision should be made for their interests in this Conference. The organization of this group will be determined by the response of those interested.

CONFERENCE PROGRAM DAILY SCHEDULE

Sunday

Special programs in all activities of the church to feature the emphasis of the Conference.

Morning Worship

Subject: "The Home in a Disordered World—A Challenge to Christian Action"

Evening Worship

Subject: "Youth—The Hope of Tomorrow's Home and Church"

Youth Fellowship

Film, fellowship, and refreshments for young people and their leaders.

Monday-Friday

2:00-5:00 P.M. Personal counseling by appointment. Call the church office.

7:30-8:55 P.M. Group Discussion Period.

9:00-9:30 P.M. Assembly (all groups).

The following topics are suggested for discussion in this assembly program:

Theme: "The Christian Interpretation of the Meaning and Function of Marriage"

1. The teachings of the Old Testament concerning marriage.

2. The teachings of the New Testament as to the meaning and function of marriage.

3. The Christian answer to the problem of divorce.

4. The teachings of the Bible concerning the relationships of parents and children.

5. The ministry of the church to the home in our day.

The lecture aspect of this entire program should be brief with opportunity for questions and answers.

Group 2. Dating and Courtship.

Theme: "Better Living Today for Better Homes Tomorrow"

A discussion of boy-girl relationships with a careful study of those values which make for better Christian relationships and successful family living. For the sake of continuity there should be no change from evening to evening in the leadership of this group. The following questions will suggest something of the areas for discussion. It is to be noted, however, that the immediate interests of the group should ultimately determine the topics to be considered.

1. How do you know it's love?
2. Petting, wise or otherwise?
3. Have you ever really looked at yourself?
4. Does religion make any difference?
5. Is beauty only skin deep?
6. What qualities of character and traits of personality do you think are most important?
7. What shall we think about sex?
8. Our attitude toward our parents?

Group 3. Preparation For Marriage.

Monday

A Panel Forum (with Groups 4, 5, and 6)

Topic: "Community Resources for Better Family Living"

Suggested Topics:

1. Child welfare.
2. Prevention of delinquency.
3. Public health.
4. Family service agencies.
5. Domestic relations counseling services.
6. School, church, and home.

Panel Leadership:

1. Minister
2. Social worker
3. Lawyer
4. Superintendent of Education
5. Youth Leader

Tuesday

Topic: "Finances and the Family"

This discussion should consider such practical matters as: How to plan and operate a budget, the wise purchase of insurance, buying for the home, meeting emergencies, saving for the future, etc.

Leader: Social Worker and/or teacher of Home Economics.

Wednesday

Topic: "The Wedding and the Honeymoon"

1. Cost of the wedding.
2. Wedding etiquette.
3. Significance and meaning of the ceremony.
4. Plans for the honeymoon.

Leader: Minister.

Thursday

Topic: "Legal Aspects of Marriage"

A consideration of such matters as who may and who may not marry, the advisability and advantage of blood test laws, the legal grounds for divorce, common law marriage, the legal requirements for the adoption of children, etc. A progressive leader might guide the discussion toward needed legislation to improve current conditions.

Leader: Lawyer.

Friday

Topic: "The Pre-Marital Examination"

A discussion of the value of a thorough pre-marital examination. The purpose of this discussion should be to acquaint the participants with the examination, to alleviate any fears and remove any misunderstandings and misconceptions which might be held by those anticipating marriage.

Suggested Topics:

1. Health and heredity.
2. Can we have children?
3. Anatomy of human reproduction.
4. What does the examination of the woman include?
5. What does the examination of the man include?

Leader: Physician.

Group 4. Adjustments of Early Marriage.

Monday

Forum: (same as Group 3) "Community Resources for Better Family Living"

Tuesday

Topic: "Psychological and Emotional Factors in Early Marriage"

1. Balancing the budget.
2. Tensional outlets—what and why?
3. Psychological and emotional aspects of pregnancy.
4. The role of religion.

Leaders: Minister, or a Christian psychiatrist.

Wednesday

Topic: "Planning for the Family"

A discussion with a physician on such matters as:

1. Anatomy and physiology of human reproduction.
2. Pregnancy.
3. Planned parenthood.
4. Sex in marriage.

Leader: Physician.

Thursday

Topic: "Opportunities with the Growing Child"

This should be a consideration of the problems of growing children interpreted in terms of the opportunities which parents will have in these problems to build toward better family-group integration and nurture.

1. What to say when the child asks questions about God.
2. How best to teach the value of honesty, truthfulness, and obedience.
3. Ways to guarantee emotional security in the child.
4. How and what shall we teach in the home about sex?

Leaders: Pediatrician, minister, child welfare worker.

Friday

Forum Topic: "Spiritual and Emotional Needs for Dynamic Christian Family Living"

The objective of this discussion should be to evaluate and analyze those factors which give to marriage and family life an unshakable foundation, and to discover the distinctive role of the church in creating and sustaining a harmonious family relationship.

1. The meaning of Christian love.
2. Cultivating Christian graces.
3. Religious education in the home.
4. Family worship.
5. The family counsel.
6. Planning for creative fellowship.

Leader: Minister.

Group 5. The Expanding Family.

Monday

Forum: "Community Resources for Better Family Living" (with Groups 3, 4, and 6).

Tuesday

Topic: "Changing Relationships of the Growing Family"

This discussion should center around the changes which take place in the relationships between parents, between parents and children, and between the children themselves and others as the family increases in size.

Suggested Topics:

1. Psychological and emotional factors in pregnancy.
2. Parental fixation.
3. Sibling rivalry.
4. Favoritism.
5. The child's need for security.
6. Parents and problems of dating teen-agers.

Leaders: Minister, child welfare worker, trained teacher of children.

Wednesday

Topic: "Planning for the Family" (with Group 4).

Thursday

Topic: "Opportunities with the Growing Child" (with Group 4).

Friday

Forum: "Spiritual and Emotional Needs for Dynamic Christian Family Living" (with Groups 4 and 6).

Group 6. The Contracting Family.

Monday

Forum: "Community Resources for Better Family Living" (with Groups 3, 4, and 5).

Tuesday

Topic: "The Change of Life"

This forum should present an opportunity for those approaching the climacteric together with those who are already experiencing it to discuss the changes, the new adjustments and processes which take place during this period.

Suggested Topics:

1. Does life begin at 40?
2. Physiological changes of men and women at the menopause.
3. Glands and you.
4. Duration of the climacteric.

Leaders: Physician, minister.

Wednesday

Topic: "The Art of Being Good In-Laws and Understanding Grandparents"

These are matters which require serious and careful discussion. Many marriages can be made infinitely more happy by understanding the following:

1. Why are "in-laws" a problem?
2. How to cut the apron strings.
3. The role of co-operative grandparents.

Leaders: Minister, family welfare worker.

Thursday

Topic: "Emotional Adjustments and Needs of the Contracting Family"

1. Starting the "second honeymoon".
2. Mental hygiene for the climacteric.
3. Psychic disturbances.
4. The art of growing old.

Leaders: Minister, psychiatrist.

Friday

Forum: "Spiritual and Emotional Needs for Dynamic Christian Family Living" (with Groups 4 and 6).

Literature Available

There is a great deal of good literature available on the subject of marriage and family living—far too much to make even a partial listing possible. The Baptist Book Stores carry a good selection. A supplementary list is available on request from The Christian Life Commission, 161 Eighth Avenue, North, Nashville 3, Tennessee.

Group Schedule

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Group 3	"Community Resources for Better Family Living"	"Finances and the Family"	"The Wedding and the Honeymoon"	"The Legal Aspects of Marriage"	"The Pre-Marital Examination"
Group 4		"Psychological and Emotional Factors in Early Marriage"	"Planning for the Family"	"Opportunities With the Growing Child"	"Spiritual and Emotional Needs for Dynamic Family Living"
Group 5		"Changing Relationships of the Growing Family"			
Group 6		"The Change of Life"	"The Art of Being Good In-Laws"	"Emotional Adjustments and Needs of the Contracting Family"	

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