

elcome to an exciting year of a ministry that will take us all to
Heaven. You have been selected for a responsibility that will require a **stead-
fast personal faith; a commitment to model what you say; a sensitivity to oth-
ers' needs and feelings; and an ability to look at the big picture without losing
focus of the foreground.** There has been much dialogue about the approach of
the millennium and now that it is here,, we find that families are more in
need of help than ever before! We in Family Ministries believe that families
will know that the kingdom of God is within them because their homes
reflect the loveliness of Heaven.

Does this sound like an awesome task? Well, it is! First of all, you must realize that **Family Ministry** is not just a *program, a performance*; it is a **min-
istry, the act of serving**. This is an opportunity to effect healing with your fami-
ly first, then the families of your church, and finally **all** families with whom
your church body comes in contact. This is **NOT** your chance to stand up in
front of the church and preach to other about what they *should* do—this is
your opportunity to witness what changes have happened in your life with
your relationships. If you haven't experienced anything, please consider what
changes you will allow the Lord to work for you and then you will have a
testimony to share! If you have multiple church responsibilities, please con-
sider that this **ONE** office will take up a large amount of time—in prioritiz-
ing, planning, prayer, and people—involvement. You will need time to realize
how your church regards its families; what your church families need; what
you as **Family Ministries Coordinator** and your Advisory Committee are
able to do; and how to utilize your available resources. While you are doing
this, remember you must be temperate with your personal priorities with
yourself and your family. You need to also realize that training, particularly
the training for the Family Ministries Curriculum is a mandated part of
being a **Family Ministries Coordinator**.

If all of this has not made you apprehensive or intimidated or just
plain **SCARED**, then read on—here's how we'll do it....



Where Do We Begin

As we consider **Family Ministry**, it is important to remember that we all begin at the foot of the cross. When we kneel before our Creator and realize that He hangs on Calvary's cross as our Savior, we realize how valuable we are to Him. We also realize that nothing we offer in ministry can compensate for His marvelous gift. Therefore, we seek to glorify His name by sharing what He has done for us. Christ has promised, *"But, I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."* John 12:32 NIV. **Family Ministry** is not to prove how talented, creative or what a great star we are, but **WHOSE** we are. Through His power we have *"become polished after the similitude of a palace."* Psalms 144:12.

With our realization of **WHOSE** we are, then we become aware of our brothers and sisters—those in our home; those in our church family; and those in our community. That realization causes us to know we must hear and appreciate and respect their feelings—we must allow them to speak for themselves. We will accept what they say their needs are, and with the assistance of the Holy Spirit seek to meet those needs through our ministry.

"Sincerity and uprightness will not atone for a lack of kindness and courtesy." (Prophets & Kings, 137) *"A kind, courteous Christian is the most powerful argument that can be produced in favor of Christianity."* (Test. Vol. 6, pg. 84) *"If we would humble ourselves before God, and be kind and courteous and tenderhearted and pitiful, there would be one hundred conversions to the truth where now there is only one."* (Gospel Workers, p. 122)—emphasis supplied

Since our Creator has given all of us the gifts of creativity and imagination, we will use these gifts to plan our ministry so that it can have a healing touch in the lives of those we wish to reach. This will present a challenge—we must be reminded that we have to respect the feelings of others and provide a ministry that meets **THEIR** needs—not what we want their needs to be. In order to facilitate this, you will do surveys, interviews, **LISTEN**, and plan. Our gifts of creativity and imagination are challenged to provide our concept of meeting others' needs. We must always remember that it's not what we *think* people need, but what they *state* as their needs that we address.

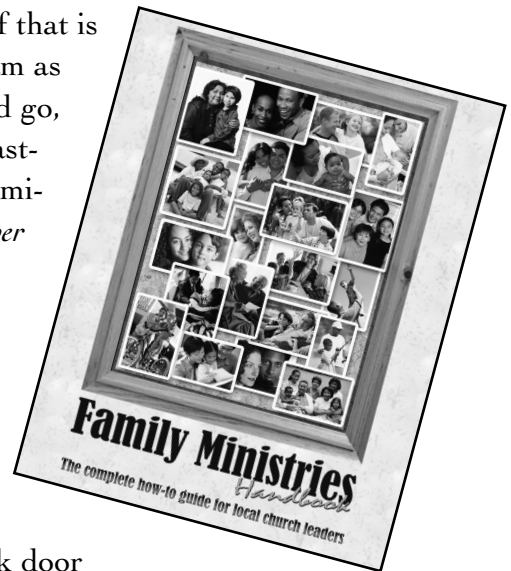
Along with plans for training for **Family Ministries Coordinators**, there is a plan for assisting churches to move to another level of service to their

families and communities. This ministry is called *Exemplary Family Ministries*. Here is a description of what you can do, along with your Pastor, to help your church become an **Exemplary** church.

Exemplary Family Ministry

Family Ministry has often been seen as a program that is used as a periodic offering in the lineup of church days and special events. It will never live up to its designation as a “ministry” if that is all that it ever becomes. The dictionary defines program as “a public presentation or performance.” Programs come and go, are applauded for the moment, but seldom have any lasting or redemptive affect for the local church and its families and the respective communities. *Ministry, on the other hand, is defined as the act of serving.* Only the ministries which are Holy Spirit-sustained, and are integrated into the church plan with a focus on its families and their systemic needs can truly be redemptive. Exemplary Family Ministries responds to community families’ needs with disinterested benevolence, evangelizes families while providing healing to their emotional and spiritual brokenness, and shuts the back door through effective nurturing and relational ministries to each family system. When this God-created stewardship responsibility is realized, all church mission goals and objectives will be accomplished.

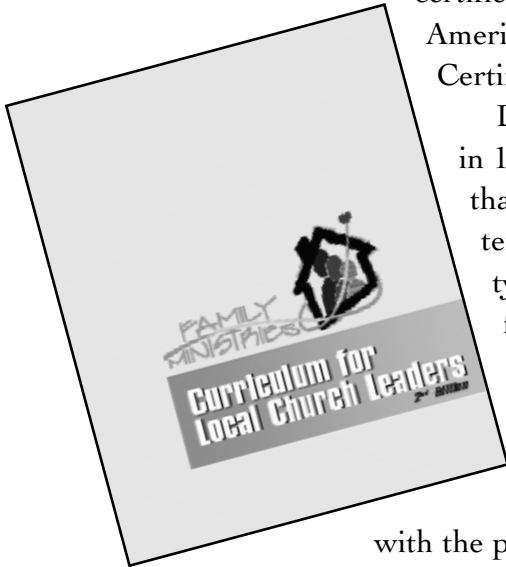
The following document reveals standards and practices that a church with an Exemplary Family Ministry designation will have activated. Even though these behaviors and practices are standardized, each church will reflect its personality, operating style and culture in the way the plan is applied. These standards and practices are to be considered building blocks anchoring each church’s Family Ministry. The designation “Exemplary” will be granted when these are integrated into the church’s ministry plan. The effectiveness that will follow will speak to the diligence of that application through integrated ministry. Change may take place across time, and God will give the results. The designation is recognition and affirmation of the church ministry concept and follow-through.



Training and Preparation

The Pastor and the Local Church Family Ministry Coordinator will be certified, or close to completing certification, through the North American Division Family Ministry Curriculum Training and Certification Program.

During the North American Division Ministries Convention in 1998, the Family Ministries Curriculum was introduced so that Family Ministries at the local church level could be consistent and responsive to the needs of the local church community. Local Family Ministries coordinators would have the benefit of training that would provide them with a level of expertise to provide some training for their church and community.



Planning and Administration

The Church Family Ministry Coordinator will counsel with the pastor concerning the Family Ministry plan and will be a member/advisor of the church board on family ministry issues. The Family Ministry Committee/Council will be active in the projection and ongoing planning for the variegated church families, of which they will be representative. The church will provide resources to assist its leaders develop the gifts of Family Ministry given by the Holy Spirit.

The need for the Family Ministry Coordinator to be a member/advisor on the church board allows a church to truly become *family-friendly*. Our churches have a lot to learn that true ministry to families begins when families arrive on our church parking lots! They should not have a doubt that **family units** are an active part of our churches. Church activities are often at such a level that families are separated from the moment they enter the church door, and then they re-group when they get into the car to go home.

The Sabbath is often filled with meetings and other activities, even potlucks, that do not offer families the opportunity to share in the delights of the Sabbath as a family unit. The Sabbath should be made so interesting to our families that its weekly return will be hailed with joy. In no better way can parents exalt and honor the Sabbath than by devising means to impart proper instruction to their families and interesting them in spiritual things, giving them correct views of the character of God and what He requires of us in order to perfect Christian characters and attain to eternal life. Parents, make the Sabbath a delight, that your children may look forward to it and have a welcome in their hearts for it. {CG 536.2}

It is also important to remember that **family** does not only mean *mother, father, and 2 and one-half children*, but can also mean *single adults, grandparents with their grandchildren, single parents, divorcees, and those who have lost a spouse through death*. That will mean that ministry must be offered to all of these people who are a part of the church and community.

Needs Assessment

A church family Needs Assessment and a community Needs Assessment will be prepared as the guide and information instrument from which Family Ministry plans can be developed. Resources can be identified and provided to respond to needs assessed from the respective instruments.

It is important to hear the voices of those to whom we seek to offer ministry. Oftentimes, people come to Family Ministry with a personal agenda, and they impose their agenda upon others without regard to what their felt needs may be. A church family Needs Assessment allows everyone member to have a voice in their ministry needs and how they will be addressed.

Sometimes the presenting need is not the actual need, but this is a *safe* need to verbalize. So, providing an environment that says each voice will be heard, allows for real needs to be addressed in ministry.

When we go to the community, it is important to be kind and courteous. *"A kind, courteous Christian is the most powerful argument that can be produced in favor of Christianity."* (Testimonies Vol.6, pg. 84). Instead of going to the community with what we think they need, we must learn to **listen** to what people in the community say about their needs for their families. Our efforts to serve families through ministry should reflect what they share they need.

A community Needs Assessment will

- a. find out what members of the community around the church say their family needs are.
- b. allow the church to reach out to others in their community that might be serving those same families and collaborate with them in sharing ministry for these families. *How the angels must feel as they see the end approaching, and see so many of those entrusted with the last message of mercy huddling together, attending meetings for the sake of benefit to their own souls, while they have little burden and are doing little for the salvation of others.* {Mar 115.2}

