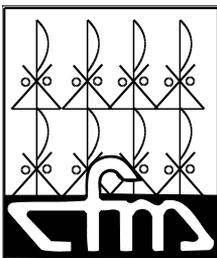


# Marriage Makes a Difference

*A CFM Program*



*Christian  
Family  
Movement*

Copyright 2008 Christian Family Movement

[www.cfm.org](http://www.cfm.org), [office@cfm.org](mailto:office@cfm.org)

P.O. Box 540550  
Omaha, NE 68154  
800-581-9824

---

## SIX

# To Have and To Hurt?

## Gather

### OPENING PRAYER

*O God, you are the author of marriage, and you know that husbands and wives sometimes hurt one another deeply. The hopes and dreams of the wedding day are dimmed, and conflicts put stress on marriage vows. Some spouses endure unhealthy relationships based on power and control. Teach us how we can support struggling marriages and help those we love to find healing and strength for the future. Amen.*

## Report on Actions

## Scripture Reflection

Give ear to my prayer, O God;  
do not hide yourself from my supplication.  
Attend to me, and answer me;  
I am troubled in my complaint.  
I am distraught.

It is not enemies who taunt me—  
I could bear that;  
it is not adversaries who deal insolently with me—  
I could hide from them.  
But it is you, my equal,  
my companion, my familiar friend,

with whom I kept pleasant company;  
we walked in the house of God with the throng.

Evening and morning and at noon  
I utter my complaint and moan,  
and he will hear my voice.  
He will redeem me unharmed  
from the battle that I wage,  
for many are arrayed against me.

Psalm 55:1-3, 12-14, 17-18

- Why do emotional wounds inflicted by those we love always seem to hurt so much more?
- Share about a time you mended a damaged relationship. What role did prayer play?

## **SOCIAL INQUIRY**

Without an attitude of mutual respect, couples can hurt one another deeply. Respect can break down when couples get into the habit of speaking disrespectfully to each other, holding grudges, insisting on having one's way, or being overly critical and complaining. People drift apart. A marriage can die the death of a thousand cuts.

For example, on the website, [www.foryourmarriage.org](http://www.foryourmarriage.org), the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Marriage asks the question, "What have you done for your marriage today?" The Bishops make the point that "successful marriages don't work on automatic pilot – at least not for long. Like a garden, they require constant attention: fertilizing, watering, and weeding. Healthy marriages, like gardens, don't die suddenly. More often they fade away from a gradual lack of attentiveness, letting things slide, taking each other for granted." This lack of attention causes pain for the spouses that could seriously damage their relationship if not corrected.

When people recognize they are struggling in married life, they should seek counseling. But how should they choose a counselor? If they hope to save their marriage, couples should look for a counselor who believes in marriage. They should ask friends, family members, pastors or doctors for referrals to narrow down their search. Seek a licensed professional with advanced degree work in counseling, psychiatry or social work from an accredited university, and interview the prospects to find a good match. The local Catholic Charities organization may also have counseling services available.

In addition, couples may elect to participate in a Retrouvaille Program, a Catholic program to help couples heal and renew their marriages ([www.retrouvaille.org](http://www.retrouvaille.org)). There is hope for the hurting. Many couples in seemingly cold, unloving relationships have found help for their marriages through counseling or Retrouvaille programs. Healing is possible.

## **Observe**

1. List some examples of disrespectful or hurtful behavior in relationships.
2. Where do young men and women hear messages of disrespect and inequality in relationships today?
3. Has anyone asked you for help or guidance in a troubled marriage? What did he or she need? What did you do?
4. What resources does your parish or diocese offer for couples struggling in their marriages? For those experiencing domestic violence? What are the community resources? What is the cost associated with these services for those of limited means?

## **Judge**

1. What is needed for reconciliation in marriage when spouses hurt one another?
2. Why is it often difficult for people to seek marriage counseling and/or marriage education?

3. How can friends or relatives help someone who is experiencing difficulty in marriage?
4. Are some marriages beyond help? Explain your views.
5. Why is it important to “mourn the loss” when a marriage ends?

### **Act**

1. Find out about workplace employee assistance for couples in need of counseling. Visit [www.foryourmarriage.org](http://www.foryourmarriage.org) for more information about choosing a counselor.
2. Include discussion on domestic violence in marriage preparation or baptismal preparation sessions.
3. For more on recovering from divorce, read *Healing the Wounds of Divorce: A Spiritual Guide to Recovery*, by Barbara Shlemon (Ave Maria Press, 1992) and *Making Your Way After Your Parents Divorce*, by Lynn Cassella (Liguori Press, 2003).
4. Identify the crisis counseling and shelter services in your community. Encourage your parish to post this information in a public place: bulletin board, restrooms, etc. Find out if these services need supplies, donations, education, or volunteers.
5. Read *When I Call for Help* (USCCB, 2002) or *Follow the Way of Love* (USCCB, 1994).

### **Look Ahead to Next Meeting**

1. Date \_\_\_\_\_
2. Time \_\_\_\_\_
3. Place \_\_\_\_\_
4. Phone or email host if you cannot attend: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Look ahead to the Observe section for the next meeting.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. May I speak to others with respect and love; may I work to nurture healthy relationships, my own and those of my friends and neighbors. O Divine Master, let me be a source of support and consolation to those who are hurting. Help me to understand the pain others go through when their trust is betrayed. May I be your messenger of life in our society. Together, we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **Your Safety Comes First**

#### ***Additional information regarding domestic abuse***

The Church calls husbands and wives into a partnership of equal dignity and value. While many spouses understand this call to mutuality and equal authority in marriage, others enter marriage with potentially destructive attitudes about how men and women should relate to one another. Many may have misunderstood some Bible passages, like “Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph. 5:21-25), to be a call for domination and submission. Instead, each spouse should seek to outdo the other in kindness (cf. Phil 2). Catholic teaching says, “Marriage must never be a struggle for control.” (*Follow the Way of Love*, U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1994, 19).

The battle of the sexes can escalate into domestic abuse. In *When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women* (2002) the U.S. Bishops note that intervention by church ministers has three goals, in the following order:

1. Safety for the victim and children;
2. Accountability for the abuser; and

3. Restoration of the relationship (if possible), or mourning over the loss of the relationship.

It encourages church ministers to see themselves as “first responders” who listen to and believe the victim’s story, help her to assess the danger to herself and her children, and refer her to counseling and other specialized services. The document suggests specific steps to take when someone you know is being abused.

These behaviors should not be a part of the way husbands and wives relate to one another:

- Using intimidation: destroying property; smashing things; abusing pets; displaying weapons
- Using emotional abuse: putting one another down; calling each other names; humiliating one another
- Using isolation: controlling what the other does, whom he/she sees and talks to, where the other person goes
- Using children: threatening to take the children away, using the children to relay messages
- Using economic abuse: preventing a spouse from getting or keeping a job; making the spouse ask for money; concealing family income
- Using coercion and threats: threatening to leave or commit suicide, involving the spouse in illegal activities

The National Domestic Violence Hotline provides crisis intervention and referrals to local service providers. Call 800-799-SAFE (7233) or 800-787-3224 (TTY). E-mail assistance is available at [ndvh@ndvh.org](mailto:ndvh@ndvh.org).

# Outline of a CFM Meeting

## **OPENING PRAYER**

The meeting should begin with a prayer. Each program chapter begins with a prayer suggestion. Spontaneous prayer is also often used. Leaders may wish to add music or other prayer resources.

If children attend the meeting with their parents, they will enjoy joining the adults for prayer. Ideas for the children during the adult discussion are available at [www.cfm.org](http://www.cfm.org) and in *ACT*, the newsletter of the Christian Family Movement.

## **Scripture Reflection**

The meeting proceeds to a reading from either the Old or New Testament. Questions are posed for reflecting on the message from the Word of God in your life.

## **Report on Actions**

Reporting and reviewing actions are important. Evaluating how effective an action is in dealing with a concrete situation can lead to more data collecting and more action. By reflecting on actions, the group will achieve a deeper understanding of the problem and all its implications.

## **Social Inquiry**

Background and direction for the discussion is provided, including references from authoritative sources.

## **Observe**

The Observe section is the foundation of the CFM meeting. Group members prepare by researching the topic and bringing the information they have uncovered to the meeting. They should try to hold their own judgment about this information in abeyance, but instead state the facts like an objective reporter reports the news. The sources of facts are important. An attempt should be made to

use a variety of reliable sources. Efforts in this area lead to more effective meetings.

### **Judge**

The Observe answers the question, “What is the situation?” The Judge answers the question, “What would a Christian do?” The evaluation leads the group to recognize what steps are in its power to effect Christian change in the situation they have observed and reported on.

### **Act**

The best kind of action is one that grows from the group’s observations and decisions to effect change in a situation. Each chapter provides suggestions for individual or group actions. You may choose one of the suggestions or come up with an action of your own. Formation-through-action is the essence of Christian family formation. Implicit in this is the idea that each of us can and must reflect on the meaning of God’s word and on the meaning of great ideas and come to express and act on them.

### **Look Ahead to Next Meeting**

Take the opportunity to see what is coming up next, what advance work should be done, and to make assignments of particular Observe tasks. Please contact your host if you are unable to attend or need directions.

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

A prayer is suggested or the group can intercede for special intentions.

### **Refreshments**

A short social time with simple refreshments helps members know and understand one another better and builds fellowship within the group.

**If you bring children to your meetings**

Many groups have decided to bring children along to the meeting. This presents its own challenges and care must be taken to ensure that adults can give full attention to the social inquiry which is the heart of the CFM meeting. It is very appropriate to include children in opening and closing prayer as well as social time. During the social inquiry, it is helpful to have separate activities for children to do.

Attention should be given to adequate supervision of the children. It may be necessary to have meetings on parish property due to inadequate space in the homes of the members. Many groups will hire a common babysitter and share expenses. Some youth groups have chosen to support this ministry of the parish by volunteering.

Visit the CFM webpage, [www.cfm.org](http://www.cfm.org), and look under special topics in the program section for ideas on how to include children in your meetings. Share your successful activities with the national office so that we can pass them along to others.

# ABOUT CFM

When families join the Christian Family Movement, they become part of the national movement of Catholics and their families that is CFM-USA. CFM is a “movement” because its members share a common mission: to promote Christ-centered marriage and family life, to help individuals and their families to live the Christian faith in everyday life, and to improve society through actions of love, service, education and example.

CFM members support this mission with their time, talent, and money. CFM families participate in the network of families who want to help other families grow in their faith, strengthen their marriages, and make a difference in their world.

CFM members pay \$40 per family annually to support the work of the Movement to form lay leaders, provide guidance for CFM group creation and development, and produce quality family-centered programming. Membership entitles a family to receive a CFM Program Book and a subscription to ACT, the national newsletter, and supports the development of the Christian Family Movement.

CFM relies on the generosity of members and friends across the U.S. that donate additional financial resources and their time and talents to the mission of CFM. Donations to the Christian Family Movement are tax deductible.

## **When You Belong to the Christian Family Movement...**

- You help other families build faith. Your membership dues make it possible for CFM to introduce new families to CFM at a reduced introductory rate. You share the gift of CFM!
- You receive excellent marriage and family enrichment resources. All members receive ACT, CFM’s newsletter, with features on married spirituality and ideas for family faith building activities from family ministers and experienced parents throughout the country. In addition to ACT, CFM

members can receive resources for parenting and faith formation by mail or email from CFM and can access bonus meeting ideas and family faith activities on its website, [www.cfm.org](http://www.cfm.org)

- You help CFM continue to serve families. CFM maintains a National Office which helps interested families get connected to CFM in their areas or start new CFM groups in regions where CFM is not yet available. The National Office, staffed by the Executive Director, part-time assistant, and aided by local volunteers, also oversees the editing and printing and distribution of CFM program materials, family resources, and membership communications, including *ACT*. The National Office is located in the diocesan building of the Diocese of Evansville, Indiana, although CFM is a lay organization which relies totally on the support of its members nationwide.
- You support the formation of lay leadership. CFM's National Board of Directors meets semi-annually to develop the programs and family resources and design CFM's outreach to families. Although most board members and officers of CFM travel to board meetings at their own expense, CFM provides for the travel expenses of our National Chaplain and also offers help with travel expenses for some members who otherwise would not be able to participate on the national level.
- You touch families around the world. CFM-USA contributes \$1 per family to the International Confederation of Christian Family Movements, in support of the family movements of the Church throughout the world.

### ***ACT* National Newsletter**

Share your group's actions with *ACT*, the national newsletter of the Christian Family Movement by sending information to the editor, [act-editor@cfm.org](mailto:act-editor@cfm.org) or mail to P.O. Box 540550, Omaha, NE 68154, 800-581-9824. Photos of members in action are welcome.

- *ACT* includes plans and resources for including the whole family in CFM.
- *ACT* tells you what other CFM families are doing.
- *ACT* keeps you in contact with CFMers throughout the country and around the world.
- *ACT* will tell you about current CFM programs and family life resources.
- Please return the membership form provided by your leader along with your annual dues, so that your membership may be recorded and your copies of *ACT* sent to you. *ACT* is included as a part of your membership dues.

## **Help for the Group Leaders**

Usually, one couple in each group accepts the challenge of leading a group through *Marriage Makes a Difference*. If leaders would like further help, we recommend a booklet, *A Guide for Leaders*, which can be ordered by contacting the CFM National Office at the address below. Leaders should also refer to the leadership materials at [www.cfm.org](http://www.cfm.org).

Christian Family Movement  
P.O. Box 540550  
Omaha, NE 68154  
800-581-9824  
[office@cfm.org](mailto:office@cfm.org).

## **CFM: Promoting Christian Family Life for More than Fifty Years**

From its beginnings, CFM has been a grassroots movement with action for justice always at its heart. Today's groups have adapted to the times but bear a strong resemblance to those that launched

the Movement in the 1940s. CFM has members in many countries worldwide, all of which cooperate as the International Confederation of Christian Family Movements, ICCFM.

When the U.S. Catholic Bishops designated the 1980s as the “Decade of the Family,” CFM quickly stepped up to the plate to address the diverse needs of families. In addition to its annual program, special books were also published for the widowed, divorced and separated, teens, families in crisis, and middle-years families.

In 1987, CFM contributed to a consultation with the U.S. bishops in preparation for the synod in Rome on the Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World. CFM also provided input to the U.S. bishops’ 1994 pastoral, *Follow the Way of Love*. The next year, CFM launched *Taking the Time to Make a Difference*, a syndicated column repeatedly honored by the Catholic Press Association.

The National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers presented CFM with its special-recognition award in 1993 for enhancing the quality of life for families. Three years later, CFM was one of the founding members of the Families against Violence Advocacy Network, and in 1999 received FAVAN’s Circles of Peace Award.

In that same year, CFM celebrated 50 years of forming families through action with a gala jubilee celebration at the University of Notre Dame, and the Hillenbrand Institute awarded CFM its prestigious Salt and Light Award.

CFM is listed in the U.S. Catholic Bishops’ Directory of Lay Movements, Organizations, and Professional Associations, and we maintain a cordial and productive relationship with the staff of the U.S. Bishops’ Secretariat for Family, Laity, Women and Youth. CFM National Presidents served as advisors to the Bishop’s Committee on Marriage and Family from 2002-2005. CFM has been an active participant in the National Pastoral Initiative on Marriage, which began in 2005.