

# youthESource Retreat

## What is the Family?

### A Family Retreat Designed to Strengthen & Affirm Family Life

by William Grimm

#### Objectives

The purposes of this retreat are:

1. to give youth an opportunity to "retreat" together with their families and to get to know the families of their peers;
2. to share expectations and roles of family members;
3. to look at ways of expanding those roles in service to each other;
4. to explore some Scriptural bases for family life;
5. to more fully realize God's love and forgiveness evident in our life together.

#### Format

This retreat plan is written as a 24-hour program designed for youth, their parents and siblings. It is written to be used on a Friday evening and conclude by dinner time on Saturday, therefore not interrupting commitments which some family members may have on Sunday morning. At the same time, it could easily be adapted to a Saturday and Sunday.

#### The Setting

Ideally, the retreat might be held at a retreat center, camp, or campsite within a short drive of your church. It could, however, be held right at your church with family members going home to sleep. It is important, however, that each participant make a commitment to attend the entire retreat program.

#### Advance Preparation

1. Planning should begin with the selection of a "retreat committee" at least three months prior to the proposed date (perhaps the Friday and Saturday before Mother's Day.) The committee should include both youth and adults.
2. Determine the cost. This is important as part of the site selection process. It is important that families are not excluded because of the cost involved. Are there organizations or groups in your congregation who may help you sponsor the event and assist financially?
3. Once the date and the site have been selected, begin to publicize the event so that families will set the date aside.
4. Develop a simple registration form which will enable a family to list all members who will be attending and their ages. You may have to arrange for some people to go along to care for small children and infants during some of the topic time. School-age children should be able to participate in most of the retreat program.
5. Send a letter or flyer out to all youth and their families. Good publicity and posters are important. One primary poster, easily visible to worshipers, should include a sign-up sheet. People like to know who else is going. Be sure you have some names on that sheet even before it is posted.
6. Your total retreat plan should be ready at least six weeks prior to the retreat, including times, meal plans and a what-to-bring list. .
7. After each family registers, you will need to send them another letter with specific information and instructions on the "Family Portrait" which they are to prepare in advance and bring to the retreat. (Details on this appear in the Getting Started-Family Portraits section of this article.)
8. If you plan to play Family Feud on Friday night, you will possibly want to design your own survey and have 100 people compete the survey at some other church function prior to the retreat. Be sure to allow a couple weeks to tabulate the results. Some sample questions might be:
  - a. What was the most popular board game in 1989?
  - b. How many hours per week does the average teen spend studying?
  - c. What percent of the sermon does the average church-goer listen to?
  - d. What is the most popular occupation in the Bible?
  - e. What is the most common gift seniors receive upon graduation from high school?

9. Arrange for transportation--a bus so everyone (including parents) can ride together to the retreat site would be ideal. Perhaps you could play some "get acquainted" type games during the bus trip. Or give some conversation starters and have everyone change seating partners every five minutes.
10. Prior to the retreat, the leaders should assign each participant to a small group of five people. Each group of five should have a mix of male and female, adults, youth and younger siblings. These groups will be used in the opening topic and Family Feud. Simply call the groups "Quintets" and give each one the name of an animal.

### **A Sample Schedule**

#### Friday

5:00 p.m.	Meet at church - Travel to retreat site
6:30	Arrive, unpack and get set to go
7:00	Supper
8:00	Opening Devotion-Jesus at Age Twelve
8:15	Getting Started-Family Portraits
9:00	Topic 1 - What Is the Family?
9:30	Break
10:00	Family Feud and popcorn
11 :00	Evening Devotion
11 :15	Conversation and bedtime

#### Saturday

8:00 a.m.	Breakfast
9:00	Devotion and Bible Study-Roles and Role Models
10:00	Break
10:30	Topic 2-It's My Responsibility
11 :30	Preparing for lunch
12:00 noon	Lunch
1:00 p.m.	Topic 3-Where Do We Go from Here?
2:00	Closing Devotion
2:15	Recreation
4:15	Leave for home

### **Materials Needed**

A poster board (22" X 28") for each family

Many large sheets of newsprint

Many marking pens of different colors

Magazines to be cut up for pictures-best are those with many family-type pictures

Glue sticks

Different tapes (masking, transparent)

Reproduction of Bible study material, questions and "challenges" found in the text of this retreat program

Recreational supplies and perhaps some game books

### **THE RETREAT IN DETAIL**

#### **Friday Night**

Supper Plan - If not provided by the retreat center, you might want to have each family bring a salad and a plate of sandwiches from home and have a salad and sandwich buffet. You will need to provide beverages, plates and utensils.

#### **Opening Devotion-Jesus at Age Twelve (Luke 2:41-52)**

Read Luke 2:41-52, then consider these thoughts:

1. Jesus and His parents took a family trip together each year for a religious observance.
2. Joseph and Mary could not find Jesus among relatives and friends. This tells us it was a trip with an extended family.
3. Jesus' parents were amazed at His intelligent answers. They may have thought, "What a smart kid we have here!"

4. "Why have you treated us like this?" (It is obvious that Joseph and Mary were worried about Jesus.) This is perhaps a common phrase spoken in all of our house-holds by parents and children alike.
6. Jesus wanted to be in His Father's house. What a fantastic model for us!
7. Jesus went home with His parents, was obedient to them and grew in body and wisdom.
8. Jesus' mother treasured all these memories.

What a model for our families!

### **Getting Started-Family Portraits**

As each family registers for the retreat, provide them with a large sheet of poster board and ask them to prepare a "Household Portrait" which they should make and bring along to the retreat. They should fill up only half of the poster with pictures of their family members, their home, significant events, favorite vacations spots, favorite meals, etc. Have them use rubber cement so that pictures can be removed, if desired, after the retreat. The other half of the poster will be completed during the retreat.

As a way of introducing each other in this first session of the retreat, each individual should share one or two items about his or her family portrait. After the portraits have been shared, they may be posted so that others may get a closer look at them later.

After this sharing time, a good active mixer such as Clumps would be appropriate.

**Clumps** - Everyone crowds to the center of the room with their arms at their sides. Participants are instructed to keep walking around, keeping their arms at their sides. The leader blows a whistle to all movement, and immediately yells out a number. If the number is 4, for instances, everyone must get into groups of four, lock arms and sit down on the floor. The leader then eliminates all those not in groups of four. The process is repeated, with different numbers being called each time, until all have been eliminated.

### **Topic 1 -What Is the Family?**

Since the make-up of families in our congregations varies from singles to traditional and from single parent to extended families, this one-half hour session is significant. It is important that everyone on the retreat realizes that they are from a household which our society and our Lord call family.

1. Divide your group into the pre-assigned "quintets," and tell each group what their retreat family name is (e.g., the Fox Family, the Horse Family, etc.)
2. Give each of the quintets two large sheets of newsprint and several marking pens. Ask them to list on the first sheet all of the nouns and adjectives which they can think of to describe a family. (e.g. mom, dad, sister, caring, loving, etc.)
3. Then instruct them to try to write on the second sheet a one-sentence definition of a family (or household.)
4. After allowing only 15 minutes for the above activity, have each Quintet post their definitions and then share them with your total retreat group. With this, you have now started them thinking about "What is the family?"

### **Break Time**

Don't organize your breaks. Retreat participants need time for talking, hiking, or just "goofing off." These may be the times when some of your best interaction takes place.

### **Family Feud**

This is the time for pure fun and hopefully, many laughs. Play by the rules of the TV show, with a host, a timekeeper and a score keeper. You will need either a chalkboard or many more sheets of newsprint to do the scoring and recording of your answers. If you have not done your own survey, simply use one of the home versions of Family Feud.

Your "families" should be the quintets which you have put together. Make sure each team gets to play one game, then have the winners continue until you are able to crown a champion. If time permits, you may want to also have a "losers bracket champion."

And don't forget the popcorn!

### Evening Devotion

This may be a very brief devotion which might include one or two hymns on the family, such as "Our Father, by Whose Name" (LW 465, LSB 863) and "Oh, Blest the House" (LW 467, TLH 625, LSB 862). An appropriate Scripture reading might focus on God's plan for the family as recorded in Genesis 1:26-31 and a prayer of thanksgiving for the blessing which we have in family living.

### Saturday Morning

Breakfast - Start your day with a good hearty breakfast, and remember that many moms and dads don't function well before coffee! Perhaps the easiest breakfast to cook up inside or over a camp stove is a big batch of scrambled eggs loaded with diced ham. Include some sweet rolls, some juice and milk to get your day off to a good start.

**Devotion** - If your group likes to sing, start your session with a few favorite songs or hymns relating to family life. Then, join in the following affirmation of family life:

Leader: Whether we are children or parents, single parents or married couples, sisters or brothers, we are all part of family life. Whether our family members are with us this morning or many miles away, we recognize our oneness with them. And so, as we begin this new day, we affirm our relationship with others in our family and especially the unity we share in the family of God.

All: God made us a family. We need one another! We love one another! We forgive one another! We work together. We pray together. We worship together. Together we use God's Word. Together we grow in Christ. Together we love all people. Together we serve Christ and each other. Together we live in the hope of eternal life. Together we praise God in joy and celebration. Together we begin this day in His name! Amen!

### Bible Study. Roles and Role Models (Ephesians 5:1-2, 21-6:4)

Reproduce these passages on the left side of 8 1/2" X 11" sheets of paper, leaving plenty of room on the right side of the page for participants to write notes and to rewrite some of the passages.

On the reverse side of the sheets, reproduce the following Challenges with space in between each item for writing necessary responses.

#### Challenges

1. How would you define the word submit?
2. How would you define love?
3. How is our life "controlled by love?"
4. Christ and His church are presented in this text as a role model for family living. What are some of those roles?
5. Make a diagram of the roles in your family--what roles do each member of your family have?

Family Member	Role in the Family
Mom	
Dad	
Sister	
Brother	
Me	
Others	

Begin the study with your entire group together and read through the entire text. After the reading, ask everyone to write out their answers to Challenges 1 and 2 on the back of their work sheet. (Allow only about three minutes for this activity.) Then take about ten minutes for participants to share their responses with the group.

Next, divide your group into last night's quintets for the next one-half hour. Instruct them to write sections from Ephesians in their own words according to the following scheme:

Any Adult -- Ephesians 5:1-2  
A Mother -- Ephesians 5:21-24  
A Father - Ephesians 5:25-30  
A Youth -- Ephesians 5:31-33  
Another Youth - Ephesians 6:1-4

Take about five minutes to do the writing, then spend the next twenty minutes sharing and discussing this newly translated "Epistle on Family living." Challenge questions 3 and 4 may be used as part of this discussion.

When only five minutes remain of this 1/2 hour, have everyone respond privately to Challenge 5. At the end of those five minutes, have the quintets briefly share some of their responses and then disband. The quintets will now conclude their sharing time and "Blood families" will become the new units for sharing in the final two sessions of this retreat. Take Another Break-and Have Fun!

## **Topic 2 - It's My Responsibility**

This is a time of transition in the retreat --a time for real discussions with our real families. If any youth doesn't have his or her parents along, have another family "adopt" him or her for the rest of the day. Then get started.

Share the following important elements:

1. How do we see the model of "Christ and His church" in our family?
2. What do the terms submit, love and discipline mean in our family?
3. Share the roles you wrote down in Challenge 5 and then add, subtract, or adapt those roles as they seem to best fit your family life.

Now move another step forward to explore a portion of Scripture which talks about serving, John 13:1-15. Start with these thoughts:

1. Would you wash each other's feet?
2. Name those dirty jobs (feet washings) that you would prefer not to do around the house or in your family life.
3. Complete these sentences: Around home I
  - a. do ...
  - b. like to .
  - c. hate to .
  - d. could .
  - e. have these specific responsibilities...
4. Now go back to Challenge 5 and add any new roles which you may have discovered on the basis of this sharing.
5. If you could change any responsibilities for any member of your family, what would they be?

Wrap up this session remembering that you have probably just spent more time talking together than the average American family does in a week. So affirm each other with hugs and take a break for lunch.

## **Lunch Time**

If others are doing the cooking for you, be sure to thank them! If you are at a campsite, this is the time for everyone to get involved together to prepare a hamburger fry or something of that nature.

## **Saturday Afternoon**

### **Topic 3 - Where Do We Go from Here?**

This is the time to complete the family portrait which participants brought along with them. Have each family bring their poster along to this session and gather as families. Give each family several magazines, scissors, markers, glue and tape.

A good starting point would be to take a few minutes to read together 1 Corinthians 13, focusing especially on verses 4-7. Look at Challenge 5 once more and write the descriptive terms from those

verses under the names of each person as they apply (e.g. Who is the most patient in your family? Who seems to practice loving the most?).

Then tell family members to look through their magazines to find pictures which portray

- favorite family times;
- tasks done together as a family;
- places you go as a family;
- how family members care for each other.

Have them complete their family portrait by attaching these pictures and writing in any appropriate captions.

As a final activity, have each family respond to these questions in preparation for writing a new family "covenant" on the bottom of the portrait.

1. What do you like best about your family?
2. In what ways can you (each individual family member) affirm each member of your family?
3. Write down one goal you have for improving life in your household.

Then, as a family, take everyone's answer to question 3 and write a composite goal for your family. Let this become your new "Covenant for the Future" for your family. Write the covenant on your portrait and have everyone sign their name at the bottom. Each family can now take their portrait back home and put it up as a reminder of how, with God's help, they plan to create greater family harmony.

To close this topical portion of the retreat, give families the opportunity to share anything they would like from their portrait with the entire group. Be sure this activity is strictly optional.

### **Closing Devotion**

As the retreat leader, you may now close the retreat with an affirmation which God has given us through the prophet Isaiah, chapter 43, verses 1-5. Join in a circle prayer where any or all of the participants may add their petition if they feel comfortable in doing so.

### **Family Fun Time**

As time permits, enjoy some recreation. If you are at a camp, you might be able to do some swimming or boating or whatever activities the facilities offer. Otherwise, try a kids vs. parents softball game, perhaps using whiffle equipment to give everyone a more equal advantage. You might also consider less active circle games, such as Rhythm, Slide Left-Slide Right, etc. Your main objective is to have some fun together while you clean up your retreat site and get ready for your trip back home.

Remind participants to not let the retreat end when they get home--family dinners might be a great time to reflect on what happened on the retreat and to start reaffirming what it means to be part of a family.

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