

A vibrant, cartoon-style illustration of a suburban home. The central focus is a yellow house with a blue roof covered in solar panels. To the left, a white wind turbine stands tall. In the upper right, a bright yellow sun with rays is visible. The house is surrounded by a green lawn, a white path leading to the front door, and several tall, thin green trees. In the foreground, a group of diverse people, including children and adults, are gathered in a garden area, appearing to be engaged in a community activity. The background features rolling green hills and distant mountains under a blue sky with white clouds.

**A
CHURCH
PLANNING GUIDE**

FOR

CHRISTIAN HOME

EMPHASIS

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5450-94

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Printed in the United States of America

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**A Church
Planning Guide
For Christian
Home Emphasis**

Jimmy Hester

**Convention Press
Nashville, Tennessee**

Countdown to Christian Home Emphasis

Date	Lead Time	Action	Assigned	Completed
	Now	Order Planning resources (see resource list).		
	Annual Planning	Request Church Council to place Christian Home Emphasis on church calendar.		
	Annual planning	Assign coordinating responsibility for CHD to family-enrichment committee or to an appointed special committee.		
	5 months before	Work with Sunday School Council to plan family-life studies.		
	5 months before	Work with Discipleship Training council to plan family-life studies.		
	5 months before	Work with Church Music council to plan special music.		
	5 months before	Work with pastor and other worship planners to plan sermon series and worship services.		
	4 months before	Plan major events of CHE (Celebrating the Christian Family rally, CHE promotion, Wednesday-night fellowships, Mother's Day, Graduate's Day, Children's Day, Memorial Day Weekend, and Father's Day); assign responsibilities.		
	3 months before	Order all resources		
	2 months before	Confirm all dates with Church Council and report on plans.		
	2 months before	Begin promotion; mail first letter; place posters in church.		
	6 weeks before	Meet with all committees and others assigned responsibilities; confirm plans and finalize details		
	3 weeks before	Increase promotion; mail postcards; deliver news releases, use bulletin inserts; display other posters.		
	2 weeks before	Check with all committee chairpersons for last-minute reports.		
		Christian Home Emphasis		
	1 week after	Follow up by writing personal letters of appreciation to all persons involved in leadership positions for CHE. Even better, plan a celebration event at church.		

The New Testament exhorts us to develop strong, loving family relationships, because our family lives are pictures of god for the world. Jesus said that we are know as disciples by the way we love one another (see John 13:35). As disciples, we show in our relationships God's care for us. We teach by example as well as by word what God is like, because God is love (see 1 John 4:7-8).

Day-to-day family living demands that we learn the skills required for loving family members.

Being Christ's disciple begins in the home. As Christians, we need preparation to fulfill God's intention for growing strong families. We need to understand God's purpose for families. Day-to-day family living demands that we learn the skills required for loving family members. To be effective disciples, we must identify our individual gifts as well as the combined gifts of our family to use in ministry. We need to be aware of ministry opportunities beyond our family circle and to appreciate the experiences, needs, and strengths of those to whom we minister.

Churches today must call families to commit to the purpose and quality of family life that God intended. Whether your community of faith is large or small, your church can accomplish some of the following goals. Check the ones that are important for your church.

Our church can—

- ◇ Show acceptance and care for all persons so the unchurched may be reached;
- ◇ Cultivate an accepting, caring atmosphere in the church family;
- ◇ Understand and communicate the biblical message of God's will for families so our strong, healthy family relationships will witness to the difference Jesus Christ can make in families;
- ◇ Understand and communicate the biblical message that family relationships are a gift from God, ranking second only to an individual's relationship with God;
- ◇ Teach the importance of positive communication skills in the family;
- ◇ Create an awareness of the need for families to become extended families for those without families.
- ◇ Teach the importance of ministering to one another in the family and to persons outside the family;
- ◇ Help families understand how they fit into the community of faith;
- ◇ Provide opportunities to meet families' distinctive needs.

Christian Home Emphasis offers your church an opportunity to accomplish the goals you identified.

Ideas for Deacons

Because a deacon is to demonstrate Christ's love, deacons can use Christian Home Emphasis to communicate their concern and availability to the families assigned to them. They can also learn new skills in ministering to families by participating in training events during the emphasis. A worthy objective for deacons is to visit every family assigned to them sometime during the emphasis. When visiting, deacons may wish to deliver copies of family-life periodicals and to help families begin and maintain family Bible study and worship in the home. After the emphasis is over, deacons should follow up on needs discovered during these contacts.

Father's Day Worship Service

Opening Hymn: "A Mighty Fortress is our God"

(No. 656, *The Baptist Hymnal*, 2008 ed)

Scripture Reading: Luke 11: 9-13

Invocation, led by a father or mother

Emphasis theme hymn: "God Give Us Christian Homes" (no. 653, *The Baptist Hymnal*, 2008 ed.)

Recognition of Fathers

Testimonies: three fathers speak for two minutes each
"What Christian Home Emphasis Has Meant to Me
and My Family"

Offertory

Special music by men's and youth boys' choir or

A men's quartet

Sermon: "A Faithful Father"

Closing Hymn: "Rise Up, O Men of God"

(no. 373, *The Baptist Hymnal*, 2008 ed.)

Benediction

Evening Activities. The evening service could celebrate Christian Home Emphasis. Testimonies on how family members grew in their relationships with one another and with God during the emphasis could be the thrust of the service. Make the service informal and comfortable; encourage participation.

Following the evening service, the church may host the Family Bible Study and Worship fellowship suggested earlier (p.19). Part of the fellowship could include food cooked by men, such as pies, cakes and cookies.

Christian Home Emphasis Objectives

Christian Home Emphasis is a period of six weeks devoted to identifying and meeting the needs of families through your church. Christian Home Emphasis can be held anytime, but most churches find it advantageous to build on Christian Home Week, a springtime denominational emphasis. Many churches have found Christian Home Week to be an ideal time to launch Christian Home Emphasis, beginning with Mother's Day and continuing through Father's Day.

...six weeks
devoted to
identifying
and meeting
the needs of
families
through your
church

The objectives of Christian Home Emphasis are so significant that they demand the best efforts of all of your church programs:

- ◆ To focus the attention of the entire church on home and family needs
- ◆ To spotlight special needs of families in the church and community
- ◆ To plan ways to meet family needs
- ◆ To enlist the church's full resources to meet families needs
- ◆ To evaluate the results of the church's ministry to families and to set new goals for more effective ministry

Christian Home Emphasis is a concentrated effort, but this does not mean that your church should neglect family concerns the rest of the year. Your church's ministry to families-married couples, parents and their children, single adults, and senior adults-will grow from Christian Home Emphasis and extend throughout the year.

Planning for Christian Home Emphasis

Some group in your church will need to accept the leadership role in planning Christian Home Emphasis. Whether your emphasis involves 2 activities or 20, the effectiveness of the emphasis is directly proportional to the planning that takes place.

If your church family is small, your planning team may include as few as three or four interested church leaders. They can use this guide to plan a successful Christian Home Emphasis as long as they: (1) are not overwhelmed by the number and complexity of some of the ideas and (2) personalize the ideas they consider effective and needed in your church.

Christian Home Emphasis can be just as effective with two well-planned events as it can be with many. Small churches that have never conducted an emphasis have found it beneficial to plan one or two meaningful events the first year and to build on them in the following years.

If your church is large and has a family-enrichment committee, it will be responsible for much of the planning for Christian Home Emphasis. If you do not have a family-enrichment committee, you may wish to form one, using the book *Family Enrichment in Your Church* as a guide (see resource list at the back of this guide).

Your church planning team may be a special committee assigned the specific task of planning and implementing Christian Home Emphasis. Representatives from various church programs might compose this special committee. However, this committee or the family-enrichment committee does not do all the work. This task is too great for one committee or group. In large churches Christian Home Emphasis should involve every church program for the emphasis to have the greatest impact on families.

A tendency in a large church might be to try to do everything suggested in this planning guide and more. The goal is not to see how much you can cram into six weeks, in addition to regular, ongoing church programs, but to plan for the most effective ways to address families' concerns. Treat this planning guide as a cafeteria line.

Kids Have More Fun Fellowship. After the evening service the church family should be invited to a Kids Have More Fun fellowship. Decorate the fellowship hall or an outside area, weather permitting, in festive colors and serve light refreshments. Everyone, including adults, should play children's games. Children should be invited to bring collections, crafts, or hobbies to display. Encourage every child to participate no matter what his or her contribution might be. A pin, badge, or small award might be presented to each child who participates.

Ideas for Father's Day

Father's Day brings to a fitting climax the celebration of Christian Home Emphasis. This day's activities are both a tribute to fathers and a challenge to continue the work of marriage and family enrichment.

Breakfast for Dad. The day can begin with Breakfast for Dad at church, planned and conducted by Royal Ambassadors and High-School Baptist Young Men or Acteens and Girls in Action. Fathers and their children should be encouraged to attend.

Morning Worship Service. The morning worship service should feature a men's and youth boys' choir, along with testimonies by fathers on what Christian Home Emphasis has meant to them and their families. The service should end with a time of commitment. The pastor may challenge fathers to continue the work of family enrichment. Then, as fathers stand, the pastor will lead a prayer of commitment.

Whether your emphasis involves 2 activities or 20, the effectiveness of the emphasis is directly proportional to the planning that takes place.

The pastor may challenge fathers to continue the work of family enrichment.

Kid's Day Out may be held at a theme park, a park, a playground, a theater, a pizza parlor, or another place where children and family members can have fun together. The church may want to provide transportation and share the expenses of the event.

Children's workers should contact every child and the child's parents to make sure they know about the event. Workers should enlist adults to accompany children whose parents cannot attend. If parents are asked to bear part of the expense, children whose parents do not participate should be the church's guests.

Children's Day. Children's Day, which should follow Kid's Day Out, includes a worship service to be held in the morning or evening, or children may be a part of both services on that Sunday.

Children's Day Worship Service

Opening hymn: "Lord, for the Gift of Children"

(no. 508, *The Baptist Hymnal*, 1991 ed.)

Scripture reading: Mark 10:13-16

Invocation, lead by a children's worker

Hymn: "Jesus Loves Me"

(no. 652, *The Baptist Hymnal*, 2008 ed.)

Recognition of Children

Testimonies: three children of various ages give two-minute testimonies on "Why I Am Thankful for My Home"

Offertory

Special music by children's choir

Sermon: "Diligently Teach Your Children"

Emphasis Theme Hymn: "God, Give us Christian Homes" (no. 653, *The Baptist Hymnal*, 2008 ed.)

Benediction, led by a parent

The sign at the beginning of the line would read: "Take the items that appeal to your church's appetite. Eat what you decide to take, but be sure you take items that will provide a balanced diet. Then, and only then, will families in your church leave the table satisfied."

Whether your church family is small or large, consider these questions when making plans:

"Take the items that appeal to your church's appetite."

- *Why?* Why are you considering this activity? Does it contribute to the overall direction of your church's emphasis this year?
- *For whom?* For whom is this activity planned—married couples, parents, single adults, senior adults, intergenerational groups?
- *When?* When will this activity happen during the emphasis?
- *Where?* Where is this activity going to happen? At the church? At a local park?
- *How?* What will it take to carry out this activity? Consider equipment, leadership, finances, schedules, church activities, and other factors.
- *Who?* Who is the responsible person or group to make it happen?

Christian Home Emphasis Theme

Churches have found that a theme helps communicate to the church family what the six-week emphasis is all about. Whatever theme is chosen, every activity, event, meeting, conference, study, or service should revolve around the theme. Themes of past Christian Home Emphases include:

- ◆ Discipleship in the Home
- ◆ Discovering God's Purpose for Families
- ◆ Families Reaching Families
- ◆ Caring in Times of Family Crisis

- ◆ When Crisis Comes Home
- ◆ Christian Families Growing Stronger
- ◆ Families Practicing God's Love
- ◆ Families Under Pressure

Christian Home Emphasis Ideas

On the following pages are ideas for Christian Home Emphasis. The ideas are by no means exhaustive. You and your church are limited only by your creativity in personalizing and expanding the ideas, based on your theme, and using them as God leads you to address the concerns of families in your church and community.

Ideas for Promoting the Emphasis

Annual church calendar. Launch your promotion by adding Christian Home Emphasis to the annual church calendar. Setting aside the dates on the calendar will communicate to the church family the significance of this emphasis.

Direct-mail projects. Two direct-mail projects, utilizing a letter and a postcard, can build awareness and encourage participation.

An enthusiastic letter from the pastor should express the church's desire to address the concerns of today's families. Including highlights of the emphasis, this letter should be mailed two months before the emphasis begins.

An oversized postcard, mailed three weeks before Mother's Day, will remind members of the upcoming event. The card should be eye-catching and should include the entire schedule for the emphasis. Include the theme, using art or a logo that appropriately symbolized the theme. This logo will become a means by which church families can readily identify Christian Home Emphasis promotion and activities.

Posters. An important element in a promotion campaign is repetition. Make several posters and place them strategically in heavily traveled areas of the church.

Many churches prefer to invite someone from outside the church to lead the retreat. Retreat planners may ask their association's director or missions or their state convention's family ministry program leader for recommended leaders. Planners should brief this leader on needs in their church and community and should outline a program designed to help meet those needs.

If the expense of a weekend retreat seems prohibitive or is for other reasons families do not respond to the retreat idea, an inexpensive family celebration may be held at the church or another suitable location. After food and fun the celebration may conclude with a family-enrichment program conducted by church leaders or an outside guest.

Ideas for Children's Day

Children's workers in the church should be enlisted to plan and conduct the activities of Children's Day. Children's Day can be held anytime during the emphasis, but many find the first Sunday in June a good weekend. Activities should be planned so that children feel no embarrassment or intimidation but instead participate in the event with the same enjoyment shared by the rest of the church.

This activity provides a good opportunity to reach beyond the church family into the community.

Kid's Day Out. This event, held the Saturday before Children's Day, can be enjoyed by every child in the church and community, along with parents or other family members. The goal is to have a good time as a family. This activity provides a good opportunity to reach beyond the church family into the community.

before Sunday School or a reception or a luncheon after the worship service. This could be done at the church or at a local restaurant. A brief program with a speaker whom the graduates respect would be appropriate.

A gift for the graduate. The church may choose to express appreciation and congratulations by giving each graduate a meaningful gift, such as a book, or a Bible. Some churches choose to pay a portion or all of the graduate's expenses to attend Student Week at either *Ridgecrest* or *Glorieta* conference center.

Ideas for Memorial Day Weekend

Because this event may not be held at the church, more advance planning and preparation are needed. For best results, this event should be held in a retreat setting, such as a park, lake, seaside resort, or another retreat where families or couples may relax and enjoy being together.

The emphasis should be on fun, food, and fellowship. Plan to make optimal use of recreation facilities, which may include boating, swimming, fishing, golf, tennis, and other recreational options. Your church's recreation committee, or a committee appointed for this purpose, should plan recreational activities for the weekend that include all ages.

To reduce expenses, families may prepare and bring food to the retreat. However, the weekend may be more enjoyable for everyone if meals can be catered or purchased at the retreat site.

Although this weekend's main purpose is for families to enjoy being together, time should be reserved to emphasize growth. This may be an hour or more each day that best fits the retreat schedule. Mornings and evenings are good times for this activity.

The emphasis should be on fun, food, and fellowship

You may also make posters of a Christian Home Emphasis calendar that show at a glance what is happening and when. Display several of these posters around the church in Sunday School departments and classes. Use the theme and logo to identify the posters with Christian Home Emphasis.

Bulletin insert/flyer. Prepare bulletin inserts similar in design to the postcard and posters. Use these on a Sunday before the beginning of the emphasis to draw attention to what is coming in the next few weeks. These bulletin inserts can also be distributed through church visitation and in the community or workplace.

An enthusiastic letter from the pastor should express the church's desire to address the concerns of today's families.

Church newsletter. Utilize your church newsletter before and throughout the emphasis to promote specific upcoming events and activities. Also consider including articles that address family concerns, written by church-staff members, church members, or professionals in the community who relate to family needs.

News releases. Personally deliver to all newspapers, radio, and television stations, and other news media individually typed copies of a news release two weeks before the emphasis. You will have a better chance of getting your message delivered if you follow these suggestions. Type the release double spaced on plain white paper, leaving the top one-third of the first page blank. Include your name and telephone number in case more information is needed. Begin the release with a brief statement that includes the who, what, when, and where of the emphasis. Without giving too much detail, outline the specific events planned. To make it more appealing, include quotations by your pastor about the state of the

Family today and what your church is doing through Christian Home Emphasis to address family concerns. Close the release with information about the church, such as the location and telephone number..

Be creative. Consider unusual ways of spreading the word about your emphasis. Careful planning should make every member of every family in the church and many families in the community aware of the coming events and eager to participate.

Ideas for Christian Home Week

Christian Home Week begins the Monday after Senior Adult Day (the first Sunday in May) and sets the stage for Christian Home Emphasis. In fact, Senior Adult Day is a good time to begin Christian Home Emphasis.

Events that might be conducted or initiated during Christian Home Week include the following:

Celebrating the Christian Family rally. This rally on Wednesday evening of Christian Home Week is the major awareness event of Christian Home Emphasis. The rally's focus is on fellowship, food, fun, and information.

The worship-and-prayer service should focus on the family. Here is a suggested service.

Celebrating the Christian Family Worship-and-Prayer Service

Opening hymn: *A Christian Home*
(No. 654, *The Baptist Hymnal, 2008 ed.*)
Emphasis hymn: *The Family Prayer Song*
(No. 655, *The Baptist Hymnal, 2008 ed.*)
Scripture reading: 1 John 4:7-12

Consider unusual ways of spreading the word about your emphasis.

Youth workers and other church leaders who have influenced these graduates should also be included in the recognition and activities of the day.

Graduate's Day Worship Service

Hymn : "Better is One Day"

(no. 77, *The Baptist Hymnal* 2008 ed.)

Scripture reading, read by a graduate

Invocation, led by a graduate

Recognition of graduates

Challenge to graduates

Prayer of celebration and for future direction

Scripture reading, read by a graduate

Hymn: "Be Thou My Vision?"

(no. 83, *The Baptist Hymnal, 2008 ed.*)

Offertory

Special music by graduate or ensemble of
Graduates

Sermon: "Building on the Rock"

Closing Hymn: "Take My Life, Lead Me Lord"

(no 540, *The Baptist Hymnal, 2008 ed.*)

Benediction, led by pastor or minister of youth

As a part of the recognition during the worship service, graduates might be asked in advance for their plans beyond graduation. These could be shared with the church family, along with the schools from which they are graduating, degrees they are receiving, honors they have received, and their parents names.

Youth workers and other church leaders who have influenced these graduates should also be included in the recognition and activities of the day. For example, as graduates are recognized during the service, the worship leader could ask persons who have taught or led them to stand.

Graduate's meal. The church might host the graduates and their families at either a breakfast

Wednesday-night fellowships may be conducted with family prayer time around the tables. Family members should be encouraged to pray together, inviting single adults and others present without their families to join family circles. Copies of *Home Life* may be distributed to each family group, and families may use the family-worship suggestion. The prayer time should center on crises families face in the church and community and ways other families can minister to them. This time should also include prayer for unsaved and unchurched families and individuals.

Ideas for Graduate's Day

Graduation from high school, trade or vocational school, or college is a significant transition in life. Graduate's Day offers you church family a time to recognize graduates for their accomplishments. Be sure to include December graduates if you have not already recognized them.

Graduates's Service. Graduate's Day should be planned for the Sunday closet to graduation. The highlight of the emphasis is the worship service. Graduates should sit together in the service, wearing their caps and gowns, if possible. They may enter the service during an opening processional or may be in their seats when the service begins.

Prayer for families in the church and community

Christian Home Emphasis feature, led by the chairperson of the family-enrichment committee or Christian Home Emphasis committee, presenting the value of Christian Home Emphasis

Special Music: solo or duet

Sermon: "Christian Families Growing Stronger"

Closing hymn: "Blest Be the Tie"

(no. 389, *The Baptist Hymnal*, 2008 ed.)

Following the service, the church family may move to the fellowship hall or dining area for other rally events. This part of the rally could be held outdoors, weather permitting.

A light snack of sandwiches, other foods, and beverages may be provided by the church or brought by families. Encourage family members to sit together for the meal. Suggest that families have silent prayers of thanks or that one member of each family lead a prayer.

After the food and a time of informal fellowship, present an overview of Christian Home Emphasis. Because events may have been assigned to special groups and committees, let them promote their upcoming events. Encourage creativity and informality in these presentations to create interest and enthusiasm.

Plan a time of fun and games for family members. For suggestions see Chapter 4, "Family Activities at Church," in *Recreation Xtras: A Prescription for Family Fun or Fellowships: Plenty of Fun for All*. These books may be in your church media library.

Close the evening by singing choruses or selections supporting family life. Join hands to form one large "family circle." The pastor will lead a prayer for God's blessings

on the families of the church and community as they seek ways to care for one another and reach out to other families during Christian Home Emphasis.

Family-nurture workshop. This workshop, conducted during the regular Wednesday-evening weekly workers' meeting, trains Sunday School leaders to encourage and lead families to reach other families. It is suggested that the leaders in each age group spend approximately 15 minutes in activities planned for Christian Home Emphasis.

The purpose of Familytime is for families to have time together in their homes for fun, fellowship, and sharing.

Familytime. The purpose of Familytime is for families to have time together in their homes for fun, fellowship, and sharing. Monday night is suggested for this event, but the time and day are not important as long as the family agrees on a time to be together. It may be any time that best fits the family routine. About an hour is needed for the activity. *Family Life and Living with Teenagers* magazines feature devotionals which can help families plan and conduct Familytime. This monthly feature offers suggestions for a family time at home each week of the month. Activities are planned for every member of the family to participate. The weekly church newsletter or bulletin and the church calendar maybe used to encourage church families to schedule Familytime. If this is a new idea for your church, launch Familytime during Christian Home Week, use the six-week semphasis to teach families how to effectively use their time together, and continue promoting Familytime throughout the year. You may also request a downloadable Famiy Devotion booklet from Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions at alsbom.org.

Ideas for Mother's Day

Mother's Day events are key to Christian Home Emphasis. Activities should be planned carefully so the momentum and enthusiasm already generated will continue through Father's Day.

Ideas for Family-Life Studies

Family-life studies can be meaningful experiences for family members during Christian Home Emphasis. These are recommended for the Discipleship Training time and should include all age groups. They should extend through the entire emphasis and should be centered on the theme. Upcoming Christian Home Emphasis resources listed at the back of this guide provide examples of materials that can be used for family-life studies.

Ideas for Wednesday-Night Fellowships

During Christian Home Emphasis, Wednesday-night fellowships can become for the church family what Familytime is for individual families. These family feasts at church should emphasize fellowship and sharing as well as family enrichment. Church families should be encouraged to invite and bring other families in the community to Wednesday-night fellowships. Themes for the Wednesday-night fellowships should be related to events of the emphasis. For example, Wednesday-night programs might promote or follow up Mother's Day, Father's day, or other events. A good strategy is to summarize and capitalize on the benefits of the event just observed an to promote the next event of the emphasis.

Wednesday nights can also be used to develop and interpret the Christian Home Emphasis theme. The pastor and other church leaders might present features on family Bible Study and worship in the home; prayer-and-devotional time for couples and individuals; and family and individual witnessing, ministry, and stewardship.

“Building on the Rock”

(Matthew 7:24-29)

Text: “Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock” (v.24)

“Diligently Teach Your Children”

(Duet. 6:4-9)

Text: “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children” (vv.6-7).

“A Faithful Father”

(Genesis 22:1-18)

Text: “Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love...Sacrifice him””(v.2).

“The Church in Your House”

(I Cor. 16:15-24)

Text: “Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.” (v.19)

“Families Practicing God’s Love”

(John 3:16)

Text: “God so loved..that He gave...”(v.16).

“Caring in Times of Family Crisis”

(John 11:17-44)

Text: “When Jesus saw her weeping,... He was deeply moved in spirit and troubled” (v.33) and “Jesus Wept” (v.35).

“Forgiving One Another”

(Ephesians 4:29-32)

Text: “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (v.32).

Greeters. Because Mother’s Day traditionally is a high-attendance Sunday in many churches, most families in the church will be present for this day. A special welcoming committee may be appointed to make visitors and inactive members feel a welcome part of the emphasis. These greeters might distribute flyers containing the Christian Home Emphasis schedule.

Breakfast for Mom. The day may begin with Breakfast for Mom at church before Sunday School. This event expresses appreciation for mothers and their service through the years. The breakfast may include a brief program of singing, entertainment, and tributes to mothers. Possible sponsors for the event include Sunday School, Woman’s Missionary Union (Girls in Action and Actees), and/or Brotherhood (Royal Ambassadors and High-School Baptist Young Mem).

Families in Bible Study. Families in Bible Study is a concerted effort to have a record number of entire families present for Sunday School.

Morning Worship Service. The highlight of the day is the morning worship service. This service includes special music, recognition of and tributes to mothers, the sermon and other appropriate elements of worship. Families might be encouraged to sit together during the service. The service is concluded with a family-commitment time as described in the section “Ideas for Family Bible Study and Worship.”

Here is a suggested Mother’s Day service.

MOTHER'S DAY WORSHIP SERVICE

Opening hymn: "Happy the Home When God is There" (no. 505, *The Baptist Hymnal*, 1991 ed.)

Invocation, led by the chairperson of the family-enrichment committee or Christian Home Emphasis committee, a mother, or a father

Emphasis theme hymn: "God, Give Us Christian Homes" (no 653, *The Baptist Hymnal*, 2008 ed.)

Recognition of Mothers

Tributes to mothers by a child, a youth, and adult;

Two minutes each

Offertory

Special Music by choir consisting of family members of all ages

Sermon: "A Worthy Example: The Mother of Jesus"

Commitment Service, led by pastor

Closing Hymn: "Lord, Make Our Homes"

(no. 511, *The Baptist Hymnal*, 1991 ed.)

Many churches conduct a parent-child dedication ceremony as part of Mother's Day; others choose Father's Day or another Sunday service during Christian Home Emphasis. Following is a suggested ceremony.

Parent-Child Dedication Ceremony

The Covenant

Leader: Do you, parents of these children, desire earnestly that they grow up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?

Parents: We do.

However, each pastor knows the needs of the families in his church and community better than an outsider does. Through earnest prayer, pastors should seek God's guidance for messages that will help meet those needs.

The commitment service on Mother's Day should be only the beginning. Each worship service should call families to commit themselves to reaching out to other families in the community and should challenge the congregation to commit itself to helping families become all that God intended.

Sermon Topics

"Christian Families Growing Stronger"

(I John 4:7-12)

Text: "If we love each other, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us" (v.12).

"We Will Serve the Lord"

(Joshua 24:14-25)

Text: "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" (v.15)

"A Worthy Example: The Mother of Jesus"

(Luke 1:30-38, 46-55)

Text: "Mary said: My soul praises the Lord" (v.46)

"When Crisis Comes Home, You Don't Have to Move"

(Romans 8:28-39)

Text: "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (v.28)

"Become Like Children"

(Mark 10:13-16)

Text: "I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it (v.15).

Many churches conduct a parent-child dedication ceremony as part of Mother's Day

◆ *Home Life, Parent Life, and Living with Teenagers* contain features parents can use with their children in a home devotional setting.

◆ *Home Life* includes family devotionals that offer worship suggestions for family and/or adult activities.

◆ *Open Windows*, a daily devotional guide for adults, is often used by families. Sunday School department leaders will want to distribute copies of these resources and to highlight their features on different Sundays during Christian Home Emphasis.

Ideas for a Sermon Series

The importance of the pastor's messages during Christian Home Emphasis cannot be overemphasized. The church family looks to the pastor for leadership, and the church's enthusiasm for and participation in the emphasis will be determined largely by the pastor's example.

More families will participate in the worship services during the emphasis than in any other event. The pastor's messages from the Word of God will help families discover new ways to practice God's love in marriage and family relationships. His messages will also help families discover new ways to reach out to others with the gospel message. Many families will be touched only by the worship services. Hearing God's Word proclaimed from the pulpit may determine whether their family lives are enriched.

A few sermon ideas are suggested here. Others may be found in magazines for pastors, collections of sermons, and other resources.

Leader: As parents, do you covenant together with God to bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and to assist them in growing, as Jesus did, in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and others?

Parents: We do.

Leader: Because you desire for your children a knowledge of the Scriptures and a loving, obedient attitude toward God and His Son, Jesus Christ, do you promise to use your home and the organizations of the church to accomplish these goals?

Parents: We do.

Charge to the Church Family

Leader: Recognizing your responsibility as a congregation toward these children, do you agree to deal with them lovingly and tenderly, seeking always to manifest toward them a Christian spirit? Do you promise that, by giving your time, talents, and skills, you will do your part to help provide spiritual instruction and Christian training?

Church Family: We do.

Prayer of Dedication

Evening Activities. The Sunday-evening worship service should continue the theme of Christian Home Emphasis. After the service the church could host an all-church fellowship honoring families in the community. Decorate the fellowship hall in festive colors and serve light refreshments. Invite families from the community to be the church's guests at the fellowship. Have name tags available for everyone—church members and guests. Conduct two or three get-acquainted games or activities. Make the event light and fun.

More families will participate in the worship services during the emphasis than in any other event.

Ideas for Family Devotionals and Worship

Family Devotionals and Worship is an emphasis that encourages family leaders to commit to, train for, and implement family Bible study and worship. The plan includes regular family Bible study and prayer, witnessing to unsaved family members; and efforts to lay foundations for Christian conversion with preschoolers, children and youth. Elements of the emphasis include commitment, training, and follow-up.

Commitment. Following the Mother's Day sermon, possibly centered on the need and opportunities for families to study the Bible and pray together, the pastor will call for family leaders to commit to participating in Christian Home Emphasis, leading family Bible study and worship, and witnessing. This brief, simple ceremony should reflect the significance of the commitment being made.

The pastor and other church planners should decide how to conduct the commitment time for best results. Consider the following suggestions.

1. Distribute commitment cards stating:

Because we want to join others in strengthening the church family and because we want to enrich our own family relationships, we pledge to participate in Christian Home Emphasis. We commit to participating in family Bible study and worship during the emphasis and to seeking ways our family can reach others for Jesus Christ.

2. After a brief explanation by the pastor, a family member will sign the card.

3. After a prayer of commitment led by the pastor, the commitment cards are to be placed on a table at the front of the auditorium or received by ushers as families leave. These cards might be displayed in a random arrangement on a bulletin board to demonstrate the church family's commitment to Christian growth through Christian Home Emphasis.

4. Following the commitment time, the pastor will share information on the training event.

Training. A session held within the context of parent-worker meetings and including all adult departments should be held prior to Mother's Day. Church leaders will orient family leaders to the resources in *Parent Life*, *Home Life*, *Living With Teenagers* and the *Family Devotional Guide* from Alabama State Board of Missions. The resources can then be used effectively in the home to provide family Bible study and worship.

Follow-up. On Father's Day at the conclusion of Christian Home Emphasis, schedule an after-church luncheon or an evening fellowship to conduct a sharing, clarifying, and encouraging session for those who led their families in Bible study and worship. Make the experience positive and affirming, using Scripture and personal testimonies abundantly. If your church conducts this project annually, it provides a good time to recognize families that regularly participate in family Bible study and worship. See the Father's Day ideas later in this guide for other suggestions. Sunday School department directors and teachers should emphasize the importance of family Bible study and worship in the home by calling attention to devotional magazines and sections in family-life magazines:

Make the experience positive and affirming, using Scripture and personal testimonies abundantly