



Table of Contents:

The Vision of a Resurrection Family Group

Chapter 1: Forming a Resurrection Family Group: Getting started

Chapter 2: Resurrection Family Faith, Vision & Core Values

Chapter 3: Exploring and Writing Shared Expectations

Chapter 3a: Sharing Leadership Responsibilities

Chapter 4: The Most Critical & Most Difficult Part: Change

Chapter 5: Being In Connection to Other Res. Family Groups

Chapter 6: Time for Evaluation: Life, Death and Rebirth

Chapter 7: Intro to the ***Covenant*** Resurrection Family

Appendix

I. Resources for discussion, study and growth
(grouped under study topics)

The Vision of a Resurrection Family Group

Whatever challenge we face, it always comes back to family. Whether it's a concern about our schools, the health and caring of aged members in our society, or raising moral and loving children, the family plays the crucial role.

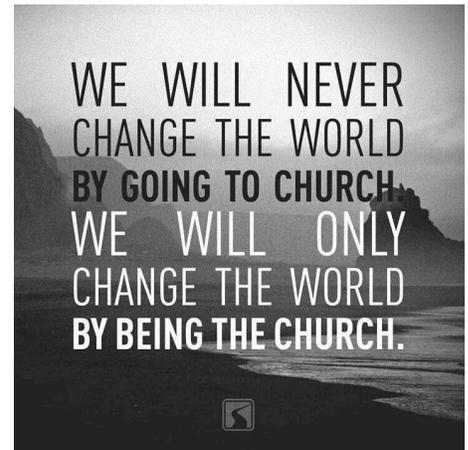
Every problem or crisis we face points out the necessity to have a strong family to rely on, to have as a support system.

We have always been built to live in a close and reliable family. Those closest to us (our family) are the ones who can make life a joyous heavenly experience.... or a living hell. They are central to who we are and what we become.

The challenge to our families is today greater than it ever has been. We are living in a time of tremendous change in all the area of our lives. Every institution we have relied on in the recent past has been disrupted. Our increasingly connected and computerized world is changing business, government and daily commerce. All of our relationships, and especially our families, are under the severe stress of drastic and far reaching change.

In the midst of all this, we have seen the growth of broken and dysfunctional families. Divorce at one time was rare, now few families are untouched. Single parent families are growing in number. Families grow distant and estranged from each other even when they live under the same roof. Survival has become a daily challenge.

A culture of “me first” and “what’s in it for me” is destroying our ability to work together for the common good.



And over all this is an unrealistic expectation of what a family is, how it is formed, and how we learn to have a good, solid and loving family.

The church has promoted this unrealistic vision of marriage and partners with "...a culture that has made romantic, erotic love the highest ideal and the nuclear family the standard of the good life. You are not fulfilled unless you are having regular, mind-blowing sex with your soul mate and bearing gorgeous, brilliant, and cultured children. Never mind that pesky human condition where we find that once we get what we thought would fulfill us, we still feel empty."

-By Juliet Vedral, "In Defense of Marriage", Sojourners Website, 7-20-2015

It is our hope and dream to change all that by forming **Resurrection Family Groups**. Only by once again discovering the power and strength that God has given to faithful, loving family groups, can we hope to overcome the corrosive effect of our dysfunctional society.

A Resurrection Family Group is in process to become empowered and transformed by the unconditional love of God. It's members are working together toward that goal.

**A Resurrection Family Group
draws from the power and
strength of the gospel declaring
that in Christ we have all
become changed.
Our past no longer controls us.**

A Resurrection Family Group brings together 5 to 10 people from at least two families and perhaps other various individuals who share a common challenge or dream. They agree to support and strengthen each other as they learn how to be filled with God's love

As they work together, they intentionally draw on the power and presence of God to guide, heal and inspire them. They look for the ways to strengthen God's presence in each of their lives as they plan, engage and work through the problems that face them.

They may initially start out as strangers, or even be friends, but through the process of shared struggle and shared faith they become close brothers

and sisters in Christ, learning the hopes and dreams, the boundaries and responsibilities of living an eternal life in Jesus.

A Resurrection Family Group draws from the power and strength of the gospel declaring that in Christ we have all become changed, that we are in a process of being changed, and that our future has been changed. Our past no longer controls us.

We proclaim that with the power of the Resurrection, we are already living in the future world that God has promised, ...that the realm of God has become evident and real right in us. We are given the opportunity to live as the revealed children of God, transformed and empowered as new spiritual beings and not just a part of the creation of a heavenly being.

This is the dream and the promise of living with the power of the resurrection in our families that every Christian claims. However, our realization of this promise usually leaves much to be desired. Our current families reflect the dysfunction of society around us. Our own thoughts and attitudes match those around us in our daily life, work and study. We live a life very similar to everyone else because that is what we have become accustomed to, that is what we have learned.

In a Resurrection Family Group, we gather together with other people who face similar situations, who have like experiences as us and bear familiar wounds as we do, but with a difference.

We gather for a different purpose than just survival. We gather to learn, explore, practice and hold each other accountable to the hope and life in a resurrected Jesus Christ. Living this way promises more to life than what we usually settle for. We gather in the power of the Holy Spirit to not only overcome all the trials and tribulations of life, but to live in the promise and joy of a foretaste of heaven, a glimpse of things to come.

We work together to become more than friends, as people who practice a deep faith, allowing us to be honest and forthright with each other in a way that is rarely found in our culture today.

**Is the Holy Spirit living in your house?
Is God's Love, Forgiveness and Hope
a part of your dinner conversation?
Would a film crew find evidence of the
Lord's presence in your daily life?**

As a Resurrection Family Group, we meet regularly for fellowship, study, inspiration, forgiveness, repentance, healing and celebration.

We build on our natural relationships to deepen our relationship with each other and our relationship with God. It is an intentional, faithful way of living.

We practice love on a daily basis to become better lovers in God's power, living out a real love, not only with each other, but with those around us, both near and far. We intentionally hold each other accountable to the unconditional love of God. We work on our spiritual growth together in that love.

The Resurrection Family Group begins with a simple outline of what it means to be in such a relationship. Each Resurrection Family Group adds to it the times and activities, the colors and shapes that makes it a unique group.

It grows and expands, multiplies and gives birth, ...as people outside the group are invited into the family for a short or longterm relationship.

Within each Resurrection Family Group there are specific roles for leaders in the group as everyone shares in the responsibilities to make the group work.

After spending time together we then evaluate where we've been and where we are going, in order to decide our next steps together.

Definition:

The Resurrection Family Group...

...is a process of exploration as an intentional extended family built on the power of God's real, unconditional love in Jesus Christ.

It is for a short term (three months to five years), and focuses on learning the basic skills needed for faithful family living in the Holy Spirit of God's love.

Together the group shares expectations that will be examined regularly outlining their God-given hopes and dreams, healings and transformations, plans and boundaries.

So, in summary:

Our Mission:

to make disciples who
transform the world...



***by creating powerful, functional family groups based
on the real and unstoppable, unconditional love of Jesus Christ.***

Our Vision:

*to form, nurture, grow and offer
intentional family relationships full of grace, charity and humility
that make the unconditional love of Jesus Christ
real, active and transparent in all our ways...*

• **In our Faithwork** (piety):

Pray, study** and worship together,
at least monthly, every week as the ideal.

**study: an ongoing, in-depth study of real, unconditional love as it applies
to all aspects of family life.

• **In our Fellowship:**

Meals, reunions, activities, trips
and perhaps even vacations together.

• **In our Outreach** (service):

Shared service and helping others in projects that intentionally
and transparently share the love of Christ with others at least
twice a year.

1. Resurrection Families intentionally work hard to have the best of the Christian Faith evident and effective in all their relationships.

2. They discern the real love of God's unconditional love, they learn how to resolve conflict and reconcile differences in a Christian way and they hold each other accountable with grace and understanding.

Resurrection Families

3. They plan family activities together, discuss the questions of life together, share outreach actions together, pray, contemplate, discern and worship together. They work out the challenges and responsibilities of living closely together as brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Join us as we explore this vision of a family made heavenly through the Resurrection Family Group.

Chapter 1



FORMING A RESURRECTION FAMILY GROUP

A common initial reaction is that this seems very regimented and structured, too “top down” and rigid.

Please rest assured that it is only a framework, a process and an outline of how a group of people can become a close family resting on the unconditional love of Christ.

Each and every family will be different, formed with a different mix of people, shaping their experience together with a unique set of expectations.

For most of us this bond of family and friendship seems to occur naturally, spontaneously and without effort.

But in reality, we have been working at getting along with people, making friends and keeping friends, for a long time. Every day of our life has had a relationship lesson and encounter with others. As a consequence a bond and connection happens in many various ways and in multiple situations.

The **Resurrection Family Group** builds on our natural family and friend making skills. It relies on a minimal structure that we choose to implement in order to *intentionally* form the kind of deeply loving and supportive extended family we all long for, we all are built for.

Just as a house is constructed with walls, a roof and a foundation, contains a kitchen, a bathroom and bedrooms, and has a door and numerous

windows, so too does each Resurrection Family Group have certain components and structures.

And as families inhabit their houses, they turn them into homes with modification, furnishings, decorations and changes. The basic framework and kind of components are all the same, but they become personalized, unique and individual through the creative design that inhabits them.

In this process, some Family groups will need little or no suggestions in inhabiting the framework. Other Family groups will ask lots of questions. Still others would like to have a clearcut blueprint of where they are going.

This chapter seeks to provide the foundation for all these groups.

A. Getting Started:

To initiate a Resurrection Family Group, two to three adults (and, if part of the potential family group, a youth at least age 12), sit down and have a serious discussion together about the possibility of growing closer together as a family. They talk about the kind of love and respect they want in their family. They share their dreams for the family and experiences they had with their family.

Together, they look at the basic definition of a Resurrection Family Group and come to a consensus if they wish to work toward being a family based on the principles of a Resurrection Family Group.

Perhaps the initial idea came through participation in a Resurrection Family Group **Orientation**, which is a time of learning about the Resurrection Family Group. There, one or more members of the family learned about the Resurrection Family Group, discussed it with others in the Orientation and brought home the initial steps for starting the group.

Those who went to the Orientation then meet with all the other participants in the potential family group. They go over what they have learned, share the idea of writing a “Family Expectations Agreement” and begin to discuss what it means to form a Resurrection Family Group.

The potential family group will initially study together learning how to live faithfully in Christ and be held accountable for the hopes for the family group

They will write an Expectations Agreement to clarify their relationships and guide their time together. (See Chapter 3 for a guideline to create the Expectation Agreement.)

The Expectation Agreement may be added to and/or modified, but in the end, all participants need to agree to the expectations. It will need the support and strong consent from all the other youth and adults involved in order for the group to proceed to the next step.

They will also explain the Shared Expectations to any children ages 2 through 11 present in this family group by virtue of their parents/guardians being part of the group. This needs to be done in a way that allows them to participate in ways appropriate to their level of understanding and to agree as they are able.

They will finally come to an agreement as to what roles need to be filled and who will fill them.

B. The basic guidelines of the Expectation Agreement include...

1. Individual Affirmations.

Each person, 12 years and up affirms:

- A desire to live a life together in the real, unconditional love of God, sharing a common faith foundation and lifestyle in Jesus Christ.
- A willingness to hold each other accountable for acting and growing in God's real and unconditional love.
- Holding everything we share confidential.
- A promise for each to do their part, taking on roles, responsibilities and duties as needed and as appropriate to each of them.
- Make a commitment to work together for at least six months.

2. As a group, all will:

- Agree to a set of Core Values that will define and mark the boundaries of behavior in the Resurrection Family Group.

"And let us be concerned about one another in order to promote love and good works, not staying away from our worship meetings, as some habitually do, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day drawing near."

Resurrection Families

- Set aside at least one day a month to meet for two hours for prayer, study and planning as they work on those core values.
- Work on a shared project together of outreach and love
- Evaluate their shared life together on at least a six month basis.

C. Resurrection Family Group Orientation

The initial orientation of Resurrection Families is approximately 10 hours of prayer, study, discussion and discernment about the real and unconditional love of God.

This results in the training of the initial leaders, the writing of a draft expectations document and exploring suggestions of living as a Resurrection Family Group such as a sample blessing/consecration service.

These classes are offered on two Saturdays of 5 hours each.

Topics covered include:

1. The basics of the Christian faith
and the real, unconditional love of God
2. Prayer, “Means of Grace” and Discernment in daily life
3. Reconciliation, Forgiveness and Conflict Resolution
4. Outreach Missions and Ministries
5. Children and Confirmation

Please see the FAQ section, #4 on **Opportunities for Children** for more information

6.

FAQ's - Frequently Asked Questions

1. What goes into a Resurrection Family Group meeting?

- (2 hours not counting the meal)

- * Meal (Before or after)
- * Silent Prayer - of centering and focus
(Initially 1 min but can grow up to 5 minutes or more.)
- * Planning (usually not more than 30 minutes and focused on group outreach.)
- * Study (at least 60-90 minutes. 20 min input, often from a video. 30-50 minutes discussion and sharing. 10 minutes wrap up.)
- * Prayers
 - Intercessory for each other, specific concerns (5 mins)
 - Contemplative (up to 20 mins, i.e. Lectio Divina, Centering Prayer, Silence, etc.
Note: Classes are available to learn this centuries old Christian technique of prayer. This type of prayer is important for spiritual growth and to experience the deep knowledge of God.)
- * Debriefing Time: sharing what happened during prayer time.

2. What are the types of Resurrection family groups?

Resurrection Family Groups can be formed around many types of interests and relationships. The common thread is that they all see as their focus the grace of God, the forgiveness of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. Here is a list of some possibilities for groups.

Extended Family Group

- * Biological family plus one, two, three or more
- * Two or more separate biological families
- * Extended biological family living close to each other
- * Common heritage
- * Common experience (Divorce, widows, singles, Veterans, etc.)

Life stage groups

- * Families with young children, elem. age, "tweens"(10-12) or teen's
- * Young Adult family groups
- * Seniors groups
- * Sandwich Generation group

Issue / impact groups

- Sunday School
- Mission & Outreach teams of our congregation
- Trafficking or other issues
- Girl Scouts, Boy scouts, sports, etc.
- Public Education
- Poverty/hunger/homelessness
 - * Working with groups such as: Soup Kitchen, Blessing Bags, Lancaster Shelter, Grace Resources, etc.
 - * Supporting a family/individual who is facing poverty and/or homelessness who needs and can use the mentoring support of an established and stable family group.
- Addiction
- Hospitality to strangers
- CASA, AV Fair Volunteers, Hospital Employees, Business owners, etc.

3. What are the studies that a Resurrection Family Group can do?

Each family group sets aside at least 60 to 90 minutes each month (or more frequently) to share in a study time together. This time is primarily for the purpose of building each other up in faith and trust while learning more about God and how they live out their lives together.

Elementary age members can be included according to their comprehension level.

For example, time may be split between total family study of the topic and adult study. Every effort is made to include them as much as possible. The children's portion may be at the beginning followed by an adult portion after the children have left to go to bed or childcare. If there are small infants and toddlers in the family, full childcare needs to be arranged as appropriate.

Resurrection Families

Most of these classes can be DVD based and consist of video input followed by group discussion. Book studies can also be used as well as a movie, games, events, presentations and displays or other type of input.

For example, a family can go to a museum exhibit on Jerusalem and then share about it afterward. They may also play a Bible Trivia game, put the kids to bed, then discuss some of the ideas that the scriptures bring up.

The key is to have the whole family prepare, attend, participate and grow in their faith.

Suggested Studies:

1. Basic studies on faith
 - Alpha (lite)
 - Journey 101: Knowing God, Loving God, Serving God
 - Disciple - lite
 - Others?

2. Family skills needed. (Care must be taken to keep the faith component strong in these topics)
 - Real Love / Unconditional Love
 - Forgiveness
 - Conflict resolution
 - Finances and investments
 - Parenting, family responsibilities and boundaries
 - Diet, Cooking and Exercise
 - Enneagram: Psychological/spiritual personality understandings
 - Home upkeep, cleaning and repair
 - Others?

3. Mission and Ministry studies (to help in discerned outreach)
 - Just walk across the room. (Meeting and talking with others about faith)

UMW studies on various countries
Books on topics: Poverty, Hunger, Homelessness,
AIDS, Aging, etc.
Movies, Events, Presentations and Displays.
Others?

4. What are the opportunities for children in the Resurrection Family Groups?

It is especially important that our children are taught the same life lessons about God's unconditional love as is learned by the adults. It is in the family that life-long values, attitudes and a faith/trust in God and in others around us are formed.

Confirmation is shared within the family when a child is twelve or thirteen and can be the family rite of passage into adulthood. This is when the child makes a serious Christ / faith decision for life. As an adult, surrounded by their family, they begin to take on the duties, responsibilities, (i.e. roles of teaching, growing and maintaining the family) and the privileges of an adult as befits their age. It will be celebrated in the congregation.

Confirmation is preceded by a growing role in helping the family **before** confirmation. And it is followed by a time of "growing into" the adult role **after** confirmation as allowed by law and family tradition.

It concludes with their graduation from High School.

5. (other questions?)