

Ministry with Families

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As pressures and problems in the modern family have increased during recent years, so has the amount of written material, both secular and religious, concerning the family. The whole professional field of family and marriage counseling developed to fill a much needed gap in the fabric of our society. Baptists in particular have placed special emphasis on the family and its development as a means of improving the quality of life and the Christian experience of families in our church and our communities.

A holistic effort at understanding the family in resort settings would necessarily involve dealing with the dynamics of the family in modern society in general. Given the time involved for this conference, however, a realistic effort must limit itself to considering only the special characteristics of the family visiting and working in resort settings. Further consideration will be given to ministering to these families.

Families Visiting in Resort Settings

Resorts that cater to families are by nature more conservative in attitudes, morals, and facilities than those that cater to special lifestyle groups, such as single adults or couples. This means that these resorts promote the concept of “family fun.” Families visiting these resorts come seeking this elusive experience.

Families visiting resorts are often:

- Seeking to get away from it all.

Yet, they bring with them the basic set of problems, emotions, and relationships that they bear at home. They bring feelings they have about themselves and other family members along on vacation, which have a great influence on the success or failure of the vacation experience.

- Seeking to be together as a “whole” family.

These families are, for the length of the trip, united voluntarily or by circumstantial force, in such a way as to intensify their feeling toward one another.

- Seeking new and different experiences from those they encounter at home.

Everyday life is to be left behind, now is the time for newness in experiences. With this is the additional agenda of desiring quality experiences-getting their money’s worth. Families visiting in resorts are often open to new and different ideas that would not necessarily appeal to them at home.

- Seeking events, activities, occasions that touch all age levels.

Their basic desire is for something for everyone, in terms of appeal and of binding them closer together.

- Seeking for personal and individual experiences.

In contrast to the above point, however, families are made up of individuals, each of whom have their own interests and desires.

- Seeking recreation in its truest sense.

An etymology of “recreation” reveals that the Latin root is *recreatio*, which literally means restoration or recovery. Families visiting resorts are seeking to rebuild their collective energy level and, as such, are certainly open to re-creation in a spiritual sense.

Families Living in Resort Settings

Although they are not generally visible to the casual visitor, most resorts are home to a large number of families who have chosen to live and work there to be a part of the leisure lifestyle setting and culture.

Families living in these settings are often:

- Fragmented by a work setting and lifestyle that spreads them out.
- Under high financial pressure.
- Faced with a materialistic culture.
- Isolated by the impersonal nature of resorts.
- Mobile and transitional by nature.
- Not supported by any community activities and facilities.
- In need of a great many ministries.

Ministering to Families in Resort Settings

Ministry programs should be designed to (1) get the attention of the whole family; (2) earn the right to be heard with the Good News for that family; (3) build relationships throughout the family that enable the communication of the Good News; and (4) personally share that Good News. Such a design for families will lead to the personal involvement necessary for meaningful ministry to take place.

Adapted from an article by Bill Black in the *1993 National Resort Ministries Conference Notebook*. Used by permission.