

Stages of Family Growth Life Cycle

Cultural and ethnic backgrounds play an important role in how these stages, rewards, challenges, etc., are understood and handled. Divorce, death, remarriage or a catastrophic event may interrupt this growth cycle at any point and thus raise other rewards, challenges, spiritual tasks and needed resources.

Stage	Reward	Challenge	Spiritual Task	Ministry Resources
<i>Single Adult Family</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Autonomy ➤ Intimacy with peers ➤ Career plans ➤ New relationship with family of origin ➤ New experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Differentiate self family ➤ Developing community of support ➤ Tasks of intimacy/skills ➤ Establishing start of career ➤ Loneliness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Vocation discernment ➤ Dealing with moral values as an adult ➤ Establishing an adult faith relationship with God/community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Young Adult Groups ➤ Adult Faith Enrichment ➤ Faith in Action Opportunities ➤ Vocation Education ➤ Young Adult Affirmation ➤ Mentoring Resources
<i>Establishing Family (Courtship/Marriage/For ming New Family Unit)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Couple time ➤ Romance ➤ Freedom ➤ Intimacy/belonging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Realign relationships with families of origin ➤ Adjustment to living together: sex, marital chastity, money, lifestyle, friends, work, religion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Develop couple spirituality – entering the covenant relationship; domestic church ➤ Finding or forming a church ➤ Accepting/negotiating differences in faith expression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Marriage preparation programs ➤ 2nd Marriage/Blended Family preparation ➤ Interfaith Marriage Ministry ➤ Natural Family Planning Resources ➤ Young Marrieds Support Group ➤ Marriage Enrichment Programs ➤ Married retreats, annual renewal of marriage vows
<i>First Child in Family</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Generativity ➤ Joy in watching child develop ➤ Enriched identity as a family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Less couple time – making room for another in family system ➤ Less personal freedom ➤ New role as parent ➤ Develop new relationship to extended family, to own parents and to spouse/s parents/family ➤ Childcare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Expand to family spirituality ➤ Develop religious traditions/rituals ➤ Awareness of vocation of parenting ➤ Expand generosity of service ➤ Nurturing couple relationship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Marriage Enrichment programs ➤ Baptismal Preparation programs ➤ Young Marrieds Support Groups ➤ Family Prayer materials ➤ Values Education/Media Awareness ➤ Faith-based sexuality education ➤ Parish Parenting Program/ Network ➤ Christian Sexuality Materials/ Media
<i>School-Age Family</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Joy of seeing children develop, excel & form peer relationships ➤ Shared tasks in home ➤ Family bonding, shared memories ➤ Family’s world expands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pressure/pull of school & outside activities on family ➤ Challenge of being primary religious & sex educators ➤ Less time for couple ➤ Dual Career/childcare issues ➤ Individual issues of each child ➤ Adjustment when last child enters school ➤ Adults dealing with issues of addiction, mid-life, family of origin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Accept each child’s strengths & limitations with grace ➤ Nurture couple relationship ➤ Teach/model values & morals ➤ Maintain healthy boundaries ➤ Incorporating faith practices ➤ Pass on faith to children through traditions, rituals, prayers, stories ➤ Family as “servant” community ➤ Making peace with family of origin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School-age Parenting programs ➤ School-age religious education ➤ Family-centered enrichment ➤ Marriage Enrichment programs ➤ Ministry to Marriages in Crisis ➤ Divorce Ministry ➤ Single parent support/network ➤ Ministry for children with losses ➤ Family Counseling Services

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<i>Adolescence and Family</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Joy in watching child develop ➤ Beginning of new kind of relationship in family ➤ Increasing independence and competence in children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Challenge to parental authority (negotiating) ➤ “Middlecence” meets adolescence ➤ Less time with extended family ➤ Continued mid-life challenge in marriage relationship with extended family ➤ Needs of aging parents add more pressure ➤ Teen rebellion, sexual issues, addictions, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Letting go of children while maintaining family unity, values ➤ Cooperate with larger church for adolescent faith development program (TEC, Search) ➤ New forms of family prayer and recreation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Youth Ministry Programs ➤ Marriage Enrichment ➤ Ministry to Marriages in Crisis ➤ Ministry to Teens with Losses ➤ Parenting Teens Materials ➤ Drugs, Alcohol, Sex Education ➤ Media Awareness Training ➤ Parish Parent Support Systems
<i>Letting Go Family</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Friendship with children ➤ Parents’ entry into new arenas (career, volunteer) ➤ More time with spouse, friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Re-negotiating couple relationship ➤ Caring for own parents ➤ Extra financial burdens ➤ Breaking continuity of family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Letting go, “healing the dream” ➤ Redefining spirituality of couple 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bereavement Ministry ➤ Marriage Enrichment ➤ Ministry to Struggling Marriages ➤ Support for People Caring for Aging Parents ➤ Support for Dealing with Mid-life Issues ➤ Support for Widowed, Separated & Divorced
<i>Empty Nest Family</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Freedom: finances & time ➤ Children settling in ➤ Grandchildren ➤ Back to coupleness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Loneliness ➤ Children returning home ➤ Letting go – pain of loss (evaluating self as parent) ➤ Entry of in-laws, grandchildren ➤ Unexpected parenting of grandchildren ➤ Preparing for and retirement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Emphasize personal spirituality ➤ Exploring new opportunities ➤ Wisdom, acceptance, trust ➤ Dealing with own, spouses’ and parents aging ➤ Realizing relationships to include children’s spouses, in-laws and grandchildren 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Marriage Enrichment ➤ Support for Struggling Marriages ➤ Support for Widowed, Separated & Divorced ➤ Celebration of Aging Church Members ➤ Retirement Groups
<i>Aging Family</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Fulfillment in life ➤ Decrease in tasks, more free time ➤ New relationships with widows, friends ➤ Grandchildren 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Loss of energy, work, identity, health, spouse, family members and friends ➤ Shifting generational roles ➤ Staying connected with younger generation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Acceptance ➤ Preparing for eternity, life review ➤ Integrates ➤ Emphasizing personal spirituality ➤ Wisdom, acceptance, trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bereavement Ministry ➤ Outreach to Homebound Elderly ➤ Like-to-Like Social Group for Elderly ➤ Hospice ➤ Parish Nurses ➤ Reminiscence Opportunities for Older Church Members