

Family Life Cycle

Dear Facilitator: For several weeks we have been discussing how successful families communicate, support one another, and organize their lives.

This week we are going to focus on family life cycle.

It might be helpful for you to know what we hope to accomplish through this lesson. Participants will:

1. Explain each stage of the family life cycle.
2. Identify one's stage within the family life cycle.

We pray that God will give you direction and clarity as you prepare the lesson and activities. We hope that the families in your group will grow together in God's love and become a source of friendship and support for one another.

Blessings

Welcome 5 minutes

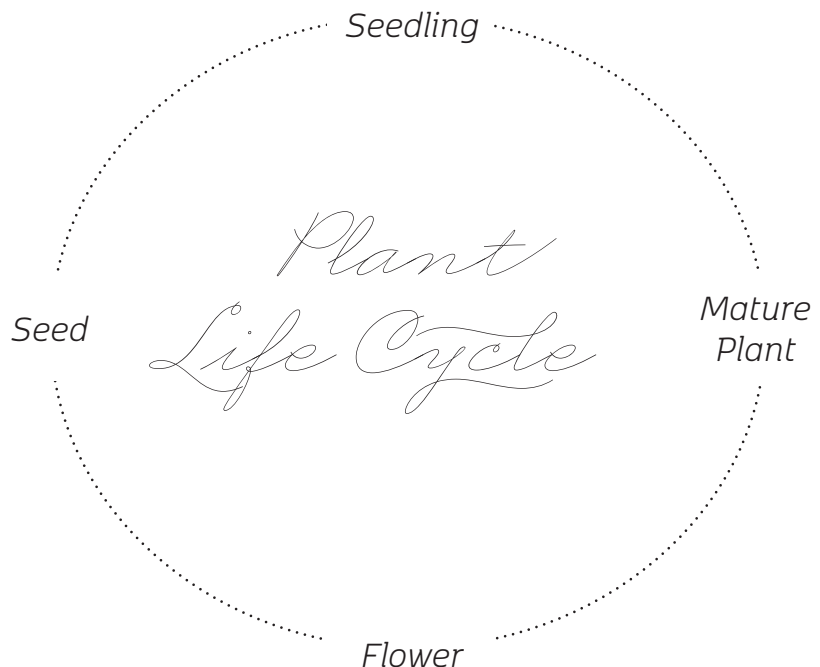
Say: Welcome back! I hope it's been a good week for all of you as you have been working diligently on many things that are positively influencing your family.

Last week we spent time talking about rituals. We identified current family rituals and created new family rituals.

Ask: Did anyone try something this past week that made a positive difference in your family that you would be willing to share?

Introduction 5 minutes


Say: Think about the steps it takes to grow a flower. According to Kean University, the seed will sprout and produce a tiny, immature plant called a seedling. The seedling will grow to adulthood and form a mature plant. The mature plant will reproduce by forming new seeds, which will begin the next life cycle. They produce different types of reproductive cells called spores.



Today's teaching objectives are to:

1. Explain each stage of the family life cycle.
2. Identify one's stage within the family life cycle.

Family & Table Talk 20 minutes

 **Say:** Recall and discuss different stages of development of your children (i.e. walking, talking, sitting up, kicking a ball, etc.).

1. Were all the stages easy?
2. How did they overcome obstacles?

After the meal, children are dismissed to their group.

As you begin this portion of the evening, explain that each time you will start with the overview and then the lesson time.

Notes

<i>40 minutes</i>	
<h1>Parent Training</h1>	
<i>Family Time</i>	FAMILY LIFE CYCLE

According to research, there are six stages of life:

(see handout on next page)

1. Leaving home: single young adults
2. The joining of families through marriage: the new couple
3. Families with young children
4. Families with adolescents
5. Launching children and moving on
6. Families in later life

Identify the life cycle in which your family is in right now.

DISCUSS

- Think back to previous cycles. What were some of the obstacles?

- Read the story of Abraham and discuss life cycles at that time.

In the book of Genesis, we read about Abraham's life cycle. See if you can identify each cycle of Abraham's life. What were key principles that happened during that time and what changes happened in the family?

DISCUSS

- Where is your family within the life cycle?
- Understanding the cycle, what do you need to work on to help your family?

Handout 1

FAMILY LIFE CYCLE

Cycle	Emotional Process of Transition	Changes Needed for Family to Proceed Developmentally
1. Leaving home: single young adults	Accepting emotional and financial responsibility for self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Differentiation of self in relation to family of origin b. Development of intimate peer relationships c. Establishment of self re work and financial independence
2. The joining of families through marriage: the new couple	Commitment to a new system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Formation of marital system b. Realignment of relationships with extended families and friends to include spouse
3. Families with young children	Accepting new members into the system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Adjusting marital system to make space for child(ren) b. Joining in childrearing, financial, and household tasks c. Realignment of relationships with extended family to include parenting and grandparenting roles
4. Families with adolescents	Increasing flexibility of family boundaries to include children's independence and grandparent's frailties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Shifting of parent/child relationships to permit adolescent to move in and out of system b. Refocus on midlife marital and career issues c. Beginning shift toward joint caring for older generation
5. Launching children and moving on	Accepting a multitude of exits from and entries into the family system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Renegotiation of marital system as a dyad b. Development of adult-to-adult relationships between grown children and their parents c. Realignment of relationships to include in-laws and grandchildren d. Dealing with disabilities and death of parents (grandparents)
6. Families in later life	Accepting the shifting of generational roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Maintaining own and/or couple functioning and interests in face of physiological decline; exploration of new familial and social role options b. Support for a more central role of middle generation c. Making room in the system for the wisdom and experience of the elderly; supporting the older generation without over functioning for them d. Dealing with loss of spouse, siblings, and other peers and preparation for own death—life review and integration

Notes

SUMMARY

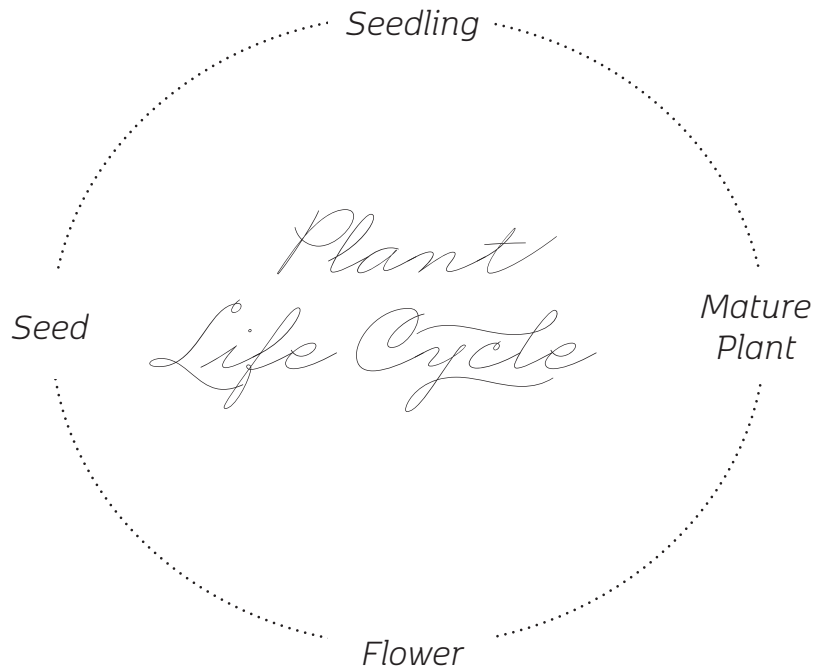
We covered a lot of material in the lesson.

Our objectives were to:

1. Explain each stage of the family life cycle.
2. Identify one's stage within the family life cycle.

To end our lesson, please answer the following:

1. Who has an insight tonight about something you've learned or want to try?
2. What will you change or improve in your role as a parent this week?



Ages 4-16

40 minutes

Student Training

Family Time

FAMILY LIFE CYCLE

Objectives

- Help children be aware of the meaning of family life cycle.
- Help children be aware of the importance of family life cycle.
- Help children be aware of the five stages of the family life cycle.
- Help children be aware of skills and lessons learned in stages of family life cycle.

Every living thing goes through a life cycle. In school you may have learned about the life cycle of a plant or a frog. But did you know that humans go through a life cycle too? We are going to learn about the family life cycle. This life cycle is the stages we go through as a member of the family from infancy to our adult years and into retirement. In each stage of life, we need other people to help us learn important skills and lessons. That is why when God created you, He put you in a nurturing family and gave you loving parents that are just right for you. Along life's journey, you will learn many lessons

that are intended to prepare you to one day step out on your own as an adult. God has a plan for you to accomplish the purpose He has for you. In Jeremiah 29:11 God says, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

God has great plans for your life!

Let's look at the five stages of the family life cycle. The first stage is the independent stage. Everyone begins the life cycle as single person. As parents encourage and cheer them on, their

adult children leave their parents' home to begin a new life of independence. They begin their new career and move into their own living arrangement. This period can be challenging to young people as they attempt to practice the values they have been taught growing up. Lessons that they have learned about integrity, leadership, trustworthiness, stewardship, and being responsible will be of great necessity now that they are in charge of their own lives. Hopefully, the most important lesson they have learned by now is to keep God first and to remember to talk to Him every day (Psalm 16:7-9).

Single people strive to be solely accountable to take care of themselves. They will need to handle their finances efficiently and budget wisely. All aspects of keeping in good health are up to them—their medical, physical, emotional, and nutritional needs are their responsibility. During this time, single people develop new friendships and social peers who become their support system rather than relying on parents and other family members as they once did.

As they successfully achieve their independent status, they begin to think more about committing to a family of their own. Although earlier, this young single was enjoying new found freedom, as time passes, being alone loses its pleasure and excitement. In Genesis 2:18, God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make him a helper suitable to him." Therefore, this single person begins to think about joining together with just the right person to bring satisfaction, contentment, and fulfillment.

When this happens, they are ready to enter what is called the coupling stage. Dating becomes thoughtful and more purposeful because they have a desire to share their life with that special someone. And in time, after much prayer, God brings the perfect mate into the single man or woman's life. During their dating season, they come across the right person and decide to get married and become one. In Genesis 2:24, it says, "That

is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.”

This young couple is joining their families through marriage. Now they bring into their new family the values, expectations, beliefs, and life lessons that the husband and the wife learned from their own families as they were growing up. They must work together as a new couple to agree upon beliefs, values, and goals for their family. Marriage is truly a covenant blessing, and the Bible says, “He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD” (Proverbs 18:22).

In a successful marriage, the husband and wife become companions and best friends.

They are bonded together in love and oneness. It must be a relationship of respect, trust, honor, faithfulness, compromise, and sharing. If the husband as well as the wife internalized those principles in their years growing up, then their relationship should go well. Marriage requires consistent communication with one another and putting the other person before yourself. Most importantly, a good marriage requires both the husband and wife to place God at the center of their marriage and to ask for His help in making their marriage pleasing to Him.

In most marriages, at some point, God puts the desire in the couple’s hearts to have children. This desire comes from God’s original command to Adam and Eve. In Genesis 1:28, God said to them, “As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it.” So, the next stage is parenting. Having a baby is a big decision for a young married couple, and it is one of the most challenging stages of the life cycle. God answers the couple’s prayer and blesses them with a precious new baby. In Psalm 127:3 God tells us, “Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him.” Bringing a child into the family changes everything! Caring for a baby takes time away from the couple’s own alone time. Now, instead of the



Scripture SUPPORT

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Psalms 16:7-8

I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. I keep my eyes always on the LORD. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

Genesis 2:18

It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make him a helper suitable to him.

Genesis 2:24

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Proverbs 18:22

He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD.

husband and wife being able to just focus on each other's needs, their new gift from God demands the constant attention of them both. The young mother and father will use all the skills they have learned in life about sacrificing, problem solving, commitment, and loving unconditionally. They realize that God is holding them accountable to raise this child for Him. In Proverbs 22:6, God tells them, “Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.” As the years go by, these parents, with God's guidance, successfully bring their child along from infancy through early childhood through teen years to young adulthood.

The couple now enters the empty nest stage of the family life cycle. Like a mother bird pushes her babies from the nest, human parents must do the same. It is time for their adult child to leave the provision and protection of their parents' home and begin the independent stage of the life cycle as their parents once did. Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.” The empty nest means that parents no longer have the day to day responsibility of taking care of their adult child. The grown child has moved out into their own living arrangements, and for the first time in years, the parents have their home to themselves. This is a time of happiness and celebration for the most part, but some parents miss having their adult child being home and experience a little sadness for a while. The empty nest stage can be a wonderful opportunity for parents to develop an adult-to-adult relationship with their child.

During this time, parents can begin to spend more time together, and possibly when the time comes, be ready to share in the joy of their adult child marrying and starting a family!

The final stage of the family life cycle is retirement. Now that the retirees are free from the responsibilities of raising children, this can be a very rewarding time in life. Because the couple is

no longer setting the alarm clock to wake up for work, schedules tend to be more relaxed. In Ruth 4:15 God says to seniors, “He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age.” The retirees have more freedom to do some of the activities that they were unable to do in earlier years like traveling, serving God in the church, or just relaxing and enjoying the fruits of their life’s work.

DISCUSS

- Lead children in a discussion about the meaning of the family life cycle.
- What is the independent stage of the family life cycle and why is this stage a big step?
- What is the coupling stage and what is the single person’s focus during this stage?
- Why is the parenting stage considered the most challenging?
- What does empty nest mean?
- Why do parents look forward to the retirement stage?



Scripture SUPPORT

Genesis 9:7

As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it.

Psalms 127:3

Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him.

Proverbs 22:6

Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

Ecclesiastes 3:1

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.

Ruth 4:15

He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age.



Activities

Activities are age appropriate. One is focused on ages 4-11, and the second is for older children ages 12-16.

AGES 4-11

Materials

Family Life Cycle diagram
Pencils, crayons, or markers

Have children view YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/sainf6nxCvY> (discuss briefly).

- After the lesson and video discussion, lead children in filling out the Family Life Cycle diagram. Children can either write the stages in the boxes or draw pictures of the stages (see teacher guide).
- When children are finished, have them decide what stage their family is in.

**Smaller children can draw a picture of themselves when they are grown up.*

AGES 12-16

Materials

Family Life Cycle diagram
Pencils, crayons, or markers

Have children view YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/sainf6nxCvY> (discuss briefly).

- After the lesson and video discussion, lead children in filling out the Family Life Cycle diagram. Children can either write the stages in the boxes or draw pictures of the stages (see teacher guide).
- Have children tell which stage of the Family life cycle is most interesting to them and why.
- When children are finished, have them decide what stage their family is in.




CHALLENGE QUESTION

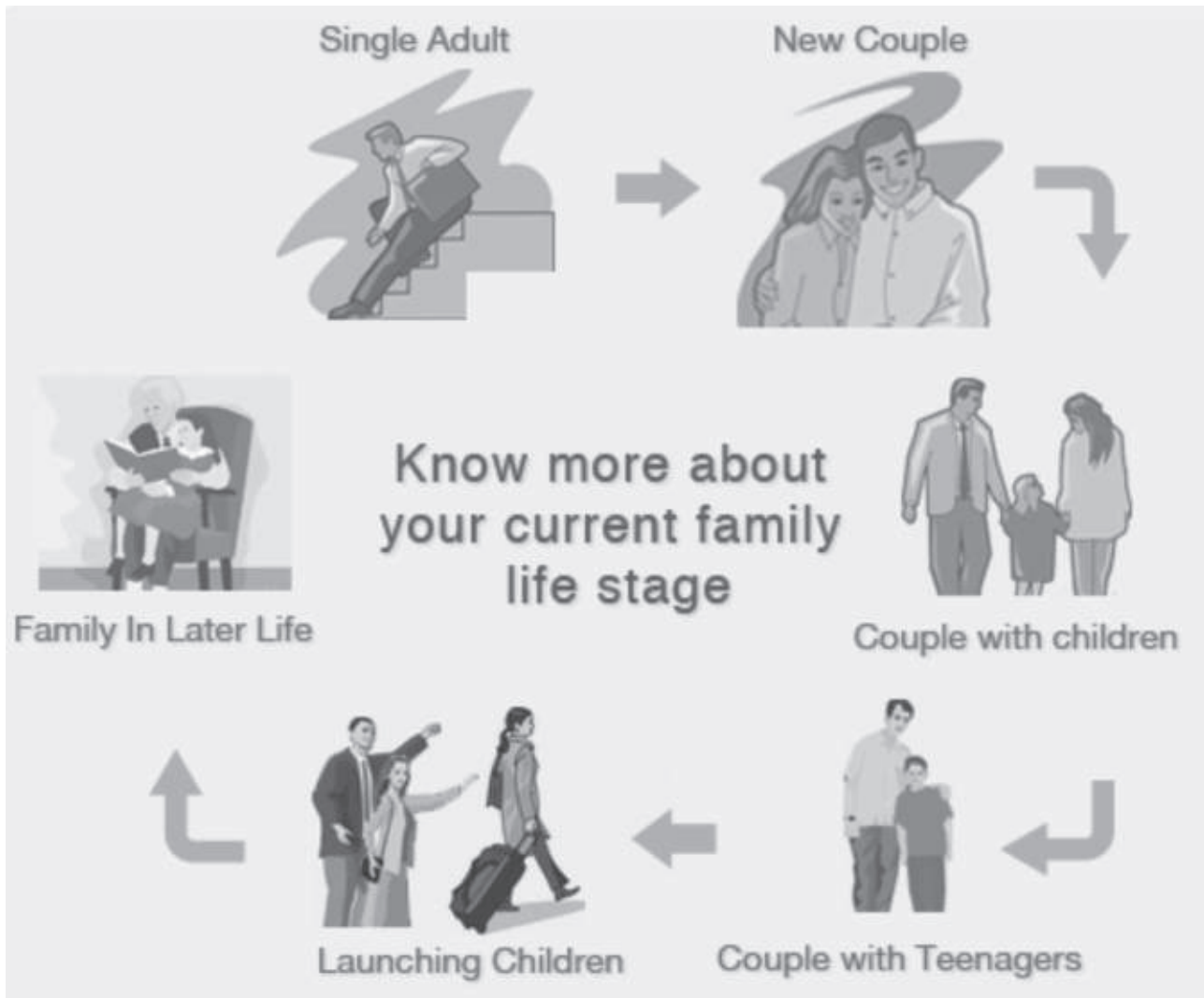
AM I DOING EVERYTHING I CAN TO BE PREPARED
FOR THE INDEPENDENT STAGE OF THE FAMILY
LIFE CYCLE?

CHALLENGE COMMITMENT

WHAT ARE YOU WILLING
TO DO TO WORK ON THE
CHALLENGE QUESTION?

	AFFIRMATION <i>Have children repeat:</i>
	<i>I can do all this through him who gives me strength.</i>

STAGES OF THE FAMILY LIFE CYCLE



FAMILY LIFE CYCLE

