

My Father's Home

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This is an interactive program on love and forgiveness.

Pre-Arrangements:


- Ask women to bring pictures of houses where they grew up; make a poster board for all to see them.
- Ask some women to be involved in the 'show and tell' portion of the program.



Arrangements: Items for display: Doll house/s; house plants; tools for building; flip chart for interaction responses

























Introduction: This program gives us an opportunity to recall our past, and to consider the importance of providing a 'home' for those we love.


Interaction: How many of you dreamed for years in advance of what your dream home would look like? (Use flip chart to list some of the features/fancy ideas for their dream home).

Homes are available in numerous shapes and sizes. I didn't realize how many categories there were until I went on a house-hunt on the internet. Use this game to unscramble some of the various types of houses:



 **Game:** **Find the House** (unscramble the type of house) 

 REAFAM	_____	MATARNTEP	_____	
 GOBAWULN	_____	LICANOOL	_____	
 PACE ODC	_____	SLACTE	_____	
 LACEHT	_____	TOGACET	_____	
 PEXUDL	_____	MAFR SOHUE	_____	
 GAROGENI	_____	OGILO	_____	
 GLO BANIC	_____	RAMON	_____	
 SIMONAN	_____	NETP USOHE	_____	
 NCAHR	_____	CHAKS	_____	
 PILTS VELEL	_____	WONT SEUOH	_____	
 RETE EHUSO	_____	SATUNC	_____	
 NOVITACIR	_____	LIVAL	_____	



(A-frame, Apartment, Bungalow, Colonial, Cape Cod, Castle, Chalet, Cottage, Duplex, Farm House, Georgian, Igloo, Log Cabin, Manor, Mansion, Pent House, Ranch, Shack, Split-level, Town House, Tree House, Tuscan, Victorian, Villa)

Interaction: In our first list on the flip chart, we wrote about the significant features of our 'dream homes'; now I want us to make a list of words that is synonymous with the word 'home' (eg, security, love, acceptance) - write list on flip chart.

Show and Tell: Beforehand, ask some of the ladies to share with the group the significance of the picture they've brought tonight (you will probably discover it is more about people and feelings than it is about structure and features).

Interaction: Show the two sheets from the flip chart. What big difference do you notice between your first list (qualities of a dream home) and your second list (significance of a home)? 1st list mainly deals with structure and esthetics (décor); 2nd list deals with people and feelings.

Song: see song suggestions included

Devotional: My Father's Home

The title of the program has been very deliberately entitled "My Father's Home" rather than "My Father's House." A 'house' and a 'home' signify two different things. A house is a structure in which people dwell. From our list of requirements for our dream home and from the "Find a House" game, we discovered that a house can take many forms. However, when we wrote our list to describe a 'home, and as we listened to our friends describe their homes, we soon realized that a home consists not of things, but of people in relationship with one another. The key element for all of us is that we would have a place which provides security and love, a place to call 'home'.

Read Luke 15: 1-3 These verses set the scene for three parables (or stories) that Jesus used to teach the Pharisees and teachers of the Law about 'unconditional love and forgiveness'. In the first parable, Jesus used the visual image of sheep; in the second parable, He used the visual image of coins; and in the third parable Jesus used an image that would be very close to the heart of all human beings, for we are a people created to be in relationship with one another – Jesus used the image of the lost son.

Read Luke 15: 11-16 Painful as it is, some parents know firsthand what it is to experience the loss of a son or daughter through death. For others, the loss of a son or daughter may come through rebellion, as the father in Luke 15 experienced. The son was no longer willing to work and to wait for his inheritance; he wanted it all and he wanted it now! And so, he left home with pockets full, leaving behind the broken-hearted father, and turning his back upon the rest of the family members.

Read Luke 15: 17-24 In this part of the story, a key turning point comes for the prodigal son. In a very short time, the son has had a great learning curve. He has learned that life is not easy, money doesn't provide all the answers, parents are to be respected, and family should be more dependable than friends.

And so, when the light dawns (v. 17 – he came to his senses), he resolves to swallow his pride (since he has no food to swallow), and he takes action to return to his father and home (v. 18), not knowing what kind of reception he will receive when he arrives.

Little does he realize that a parent does not easily give up on a lost child – the father is waiting, with open arms, to receive his son. And so, there is a great celebration “For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found” (v. 24).

Sounds like a nice happy ending to the story doesn't it? Wait! The parable isn't over yet.

Read Luke 15: 25-32 Unlike some parents, not all family members are willing to forgive and forget; such was the case with the elder brother. He still remembered the temper tantrum, the lack of respect shown towards his father, and especially the unwillingness of the younger brother to pull his weight at work. How could his father so easily show love and forgiveness to the young rebellious kid? While he could not understand (or chose not to seek understanding), the elder son missed out on a great celebration and the opportunity to show love and forgiveness by refusing to go into his home (v. 28).

This parable, though told by Jesus a long time ago, sounds like a story about some of our families today. What is the lesson Jesus is teaching us today? It is about family. Who is my family? My blood-relatives, fellow Christians, church members, neighbors, AND all who live and breathe the breath of life! In Luke 15: 1-3, we were told that Jesus was teaching a lesson to the Pharisees and teachers of the law ('righteous people') who thought they were better than the sinners and the tax collectors ('sinners'). The Pharisees and teachers of the law were behaving like the elder son; they preferred to pout and throw their own temper tantrum and miss the celebration, instead of rejoicing over the love and forgiveness shown by Jesus towards the sinners.

This parable has the power to challenge all of us today:

- >How do we act towards non-professing Christians?
- >Are we willing to show love and forgiveness to the rebellious?
- >Do we celebrate or pout when others are highlighted and celebrated?
- >Do we prefer to bask in our own salvation while ignoring those who need to know that God's love and forgiveness also extends to them?
- >Is our church a 'home' where others know they can find love, forgiveness, and acceptance?

Perhaps the truthful answers to some of these questions are not easy to admit; yet, it is the first step to our own returning to the Father's home where we will receive love and forgiveness.

Song: see song suggestions included

Prayer in Unison:

God, our Father, we are so grateful that You are loving and forgiving.

We acknowledge that we need your love and forgiveness daily.

Forgive us for times when we have been selfish and slow in sharing You with others.

By the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives, help us to have the desire to share the joy of knowing You.

We ask Your blessing on our individual homes; may they be a haven from the storms of life.

And may all who enter them know that we serve the God of love and forgiveness.

This we pray, and ask, in the name of Your Son, and our Savior – Jesus Christ,
Amen.

Closing Thots

“It takes hands to build a house, but only hearts can build a home.”
(Author unknown)

“A house is made with walls and beams. A home is made with love and dreams.”
(Author unknown)

Songs Suggestions: (All songs are found in The Salvation Army Songbook)

Above the waves of earthly strife (my beautiful home) 872

Happy the home when God is there 661

Home is home, however lowly 663

I have a home that is fairer than day 881

O there's joy in every heart 664

Sing the wondrous love of Jesus 892

