

Prayer and Love Saves (PALS)

I. Purpose of the PALS Program

The purpose of the PALS program is to encourage parents who have adult children who have wandered from God and the church. It is to provide an arena in which such parents can overcome their guilt, find support in one another in mutual concern, develop skills to build relationships with adult children and their families and intercede for their adult children in prayer.

II. Scope of the PALS Program

The PALS program has eleven lessons, which are divided into three basic focus areas: accepting, loving and praying.

Part I focuses on the reality of the situation and encourages parents to accept the things they cannot change, to work with the things they can and to know the difference when it comes to their relationships with their adult children. It's about releasing parents from blame, letting go to face their own feelings, and taking a look at the differences between themselves and their children.

Part II is a practical section of what parents can do to build better relationships with their adult children and their grandchildren. It is looking to the future and choosing the steps by which they can communicate love.

Part III is devoted to interceding for adult children who are prodigals. It offers prayer support for parents who are in pain over the choices their adult children have made. The final chapter makes suggestions for a better future.

III. Program Schedule

The following is a suggested outline for using the material in a 70-minute group sessions. This could be lengthened to 90 minutes and allow more time for sharing, Bible study, group discussion and prayer. It could be shortened to 55 minutes by supplying the parent showcase and Bible Study as handouts for the parents to do at home. Feel free to adapt this material to the amount of time available.

1. Sharing Exercise - 10 minutes
2. Presentation of Topic - 15 minutes
3. Parent Showcase - 5 minutes
4. Handout on Topic
5. Small Group Bible Study - 10 minutes

6. Group Discussion on Topic - 20 minutes
7. Prayer Time - 10 minutes

IV. Organizational Structure

The material has been prepared so that the group leader could easily pick up the material and use it to lead a support-prayer group with a minimum amount of preparation. One person could do all of the basic presentation, or the leader could organize others to give the presentations and parent showcase.

1. Sharing Exercise—This is an icebreaker type of small group activity or whole group interactions that is designed to relax the members or to get them thinking about the topic in an informal way. It is designed to help the members to get to know each other and their children better so that they can feel more empathy and understand where they are coming from. It aids in the bonding of group members. While all are encouraged to share, no one should feel pressured. Parents should be told that they should not share personal information about their adult children or any information that might anger or embarrass the adult children if they should find out it was shared.

2. Presentation of the Topic—This could be used as it is for a prepared talk or it could be duplicated and given out as an assigned reading before the next session. If it is used as an assigned reading, then the presenter would simply give a three to five minute summary at the next session, thus leaving more time for Bible study and topic discussion. This might work with some groups, but would be a problem if all of the members did not do their assignments. The content of the topic is vital for a meaningful discussion time and related Bible study activity.

3. Parent Showcase—This is a story of an actual parent or parents who put into practice the concept emphasized for the day. It uses stories of modern Christian parents or ones taken from history of how parents used that principle. This could be done by the leader or he/she may choose to assign this to a different person each week.

4. Handout on the Topic—There is at least a one-page handout for each lesson. Except in the case of Lesson 11, these will not be used during the presentation, but will be handed out for the parents to take home and use on their own. Some give helpful ideas for personal devotional time.

5. Bible Study—These studies focus on a Biblical parent(s) who faced a similar situation or applied the principle under discussion. If the group is small, they could go through this together. Read through the Scriptures given and discuss the questions. If the group is more than eight, divide into smaller groups of four to six to do this study. Everyone should have a copy of the Bible study page.

6. Group Discussion—This discussion could be led by the group leader or divide into smaller groups and give each person a copy of the questions and discuss in their group. Bring all members back together and ask for a summary of answers from the groups.

7. Prayer Time—This is a time for the parents to pray for each other, their own children and the

children of others. It is time of intercession focused on the parents' concerns for their children and grandchildren. Other issues should not be brought in. Varied ways of leading the group into prayer time are suggested. Sometimes the prayers will be focused on a specific area of need and other times they may be more general in nature. At times the focus will be on the parents and at other times on their adult children. These ideas given are only suggestions and the leader should feel free to lead in prayer in the most appropriate way for his/her group.

V. Optional Uses of This Material

1. Weekly Prayer Group—This group could meet at the church or in someone's home at a convenient time. There is enough material for three months. At the end of the three months the group will have the option of continuing. Several books on the references list would be good textbooks to use for a second quarterly series. The leader should review these books to see which ones are the most suitable for the group.
2. Monthly Prayer Group—A monthly group may want to include more time for socialization, perhaps a supper or breakfast together before the lessons begin. There are eleven lessons, about right for a year if time is allowed for the holidays.
3. Sabbath School Alternative—This material could be used as a support group Sabbath School lessons quarterly for one quarter. The presentation of the material would need to be adapted to the time allotted for lesson study in your church.
4. Weekend Retreat—Plan a weekend retreat at a lodge, hotel or at a conference camp facility. By doing two lessons on Friday evening, three on Sabbath morning, two on Sabbath afternoon, two on Sabbath evening and two on Sunday morning, all of the lessons could be covered in a weekend.
5. Three Weekend Seminars—The seminars could include one or two sessions on Friday evening and another two or three on Sabbath afternoon, according to the segment of the program used. Do Part I: Accepting Parents on one weekend, Part II: Loving Parents on a second weekend, and Part III: Praying Parents on a third weekend.
6. Camp Meeting Seminar—Use the material for seminars that would be held either once or twice daily, thus covering five or ten of the topics. The leader would need to select the topics to be deleted or combine some topics that are similar in content.
7. Convention Seminar—Material could be adapted for one day or a part of each day at a retiree's convention. Use selected topics.