

2010 FAMILY LIFE THEME: FAMILIES PLAY THE GAME

INTRODUCTION

South Africa is all agog waiting for the big event of the century, the **2010 SOCCER WORLD CUP** to be held in various venues around the country during June and July. It promises to be an exciting event for soccer fans from all over the world.

South Africa and its attractions will be showcased to many thousands of visitors. Will we forget about God during that time? We hope not. The campaign **CHURCH ON THE BALL**

www.churchontheball.com will be a reminder, an information resource and a chance to relate God, our Creator to the Game of Life that we all play in our homes, families, workplaces, sportsfields and everywhere else.

It is to be hoped that families will come together to enjoy this sporting feast rather than torn apart.

It is to be hoped that as South African families we will be hospitable to our guests and visitors.

It is to be hoped that the evils of crime, corruption, violence, hooliganism, prostitution and human trafficking will be kept at bay.

It is everyone's responsibility to "play the game" and to play it fairly and do our best to ensure others do the same. In that way it will be a year to remember.

JANUARY – THE GAME OF LIFE.

One could say life is not a game; it is a serious matter, but even games can be serious. Life is a game to be played and enjoyed, but played according to the rules, God's rules that demand respect for life. One of the family's task in Church and society is to nurture the life of its members from conception until natural death. *How are we in our family playing the game of life? What are we doing to show appreciation for all life in our family?*

FEBRUARY – MATCH PLAY.

Life is a game and it is also a match. There are times in our lives when match-making means looking out for the best life partner for ourselves and our children, or in being that good life partner. In another sense life is playing a match, not just as a contest but as a matching of abilities, skills and talents.



How well matched are we in our relationships as couples, parents and children, siblings and so on? Are you in training to improve your skills?

MARCH – KEEP THE RULES

Human Rights' Month in South

Africa should not merely be focusing on our rights as individuals, families, and workers. We also need to use our rights for the good of all by keeping to the rules as responsible citizens. Then there may also be times when we need to examine the rules. Are they just and fair to all? These are all good questions to consider during this season of Lent.

How well do the rules in your family work? Do they need to be revised or more strictly applied? How can we each personally take responsibility for our lives, keeping within the rules that apply?

APRIL – GOD'S GAME PLAN

God's plan goes back a very long way and involves the whole of creation. It evolved over many millions of years and continues to evolve. We human beings were given the task of being custodians of God's plan when it comes to the world around us as well as within us.

During this special Easter month reflect on God's plan of salvation, give thanks for the wonderful world God created and resolve to look into God's game plan for you and so to build up your own little world, starting at home.

MAY - THE PARENTING GAME.

Becoming parents is a joy but also no joke. The years of being a young parent are probably the years when most games are played in the home, from the peek-a-boo games with a baby, to cricket and soccer games on the lawn, board games on cold nights and TV games too. We know the saying "the family that prays together stays together" but it is vital that parents and children throughout their lifespan should play together too, should have fun and enjoy their unique relationship. Difficulties can be addressed or put aside with the good will that comes from constructive play.

Discuss how you understand the Parenting Game. How good is your family at playing games? Can you do more?

JUNE - THE BEAUTIFUL GAME

The time we have been waiting for has arrived. The World Cup Soccer matches will be played over the next few weeks. Young people no doubt will be very involved, volunteering, helping, watching and enjoying the excitement and the atmosphere. It is also a time when things could go wrong, if selfish needs and greed are allowed to get out of hand. It is important not to lose touch with one another as families, to provide guidance and support where needed. We must also be aware of the evils of gambling, drinking, drugs, prostitution and trafficking which go along with international events like this.

How can you as a family make the most of this exciting time?

JULY - VETERAN'S CUP

Sport is not only for the young and fit. Even older people can and need to keep as fit as possible and play what sport they can. They need to play their part in the game of life and so avoid becoming frustrated and irritable. They can look back on the many sporting events they have witnessed and share with the young how things have changed and grown.

Discuss and share. In how many ways are the olden days better or not? Are we tolerant of one another across the generations?

AUGUST - HOW MEN AND WOMEN PLAY

In many ways men and women are competing as equals but in sport there are still different standards. This is because of our physical makeup, but there are also other differences in how men and women play games. These need not be seen as obstacles to be overcome but qualities to be celebrated. At the same time it is also important not to stereotype people into gender roles.

Ask yourselves: Who is most competitive, most dedicated, the best loser? Are boys and girls in the family allowed to be who they are or being channeled into particular paths, especially being pushed into success and achievement?

SEPTEMBER - A SPORTING TRADITION

Some families are very involved in sport, some not at all. In some families everyone plays a different sport while in others they all play tennis or have another common interest. Gym common nowadays too and is very good for one's health. In today's society with cellphones, TV and computers families have to make an extra effort to take an interest in sport and physical wellbeing. It is especially valuable if they can do some outdoor activities together. "Couch rugby" is no substitute for the real thing. *What kind of sporting tradition exists in your family? Could you do more?*

OCTOBER - ALL FOR ONE & ONE FOR ALL

Our mission in life as families is to become good sports in the widest sense which includes the ideal of the common good. In families the members learn to develop a good sporting attitude, to stand up for one another and support each other rather than be competing and comparing overly much, playing the 'mine is better than yours' game. This attitude can be carried over to all other areas of our lives.

How good are you at living out the slogan "all for one and one for all?"

NOVEMBER - GOOD LOSER, BAD LOSER

It is in families from very early days, playing catch or hide-and-seek that children learn how to be good losers rather than bad losers. Parents may have to work hard with some children that sulk or throw tantrums while others don't want to try for fear of losing. Loss in life is inevitable and games and sport are some of the best way to learn the skills to cope with the big and little losses of life.

How do you practice the skills of being good losers?

DECEMBER - THE PRIZE - A GIFT

It is not only in sports that one wins prizes. St Paul speaks of life as a race with a prize at the end too.

So while we look forward to the prize, the reward and the gift of eternal life, we are also entitled to enjoy the game. Family life is potentially one of the most joyful games, if also one of the most difficult tasks in life but the prize and the gift of joy can be celebrated in a special way at Christmastime.

Do we engage in sport just for winning a prize or for the joy of it? What have you been doing to win the prize?

SOCCER WORLD CUP PRAYER

Almighty God, creator of all,
As people from every nation gather with excitement and enthusiasm for the World Soccer Cup of 2010 may South Africans be good hosts,
our visitors welcome guests
and the players from every team be blessed with good sportsmanship and health.
May your Spirit of fairness, justice and peace prevail, amongst players and all involved.
May we each contribute in our own positive ways to prevent, control and fight crime and corruption, hooliganism of any kind and exploitation and abuse, especially of those most vulnerable.
May those far away from home and those in their families across the world find much joy in this occasion to celebrate the beautiful game of soccer and the beautiful game of life according to Your plan for the common good of all.
Amen

