

Family Blessing Service

To encourage and uplift the families of your Adventurer Club, try this special service. It could take the place of induction, or it could be used during a parent meeting or Adventurer Sabbath during the year.

The Adventurer Blessing Service is a special ceremony which gives parents the opportunity to bless their children by affirming to them their value in the eyes of their parents and in the eyes of God. During this service, parents recommit themselves to stand by children in good times and in bad times, and to always seek to model for their children the great and unfailing love of God.

The Adventurer Blessing Service consists of the following:

- ❖ Entrance of Families
- ❖ The Tradition of Blessing
- ❖ Readings from Scripture
- ❖ Affirmation of Value
- ❖ Family Pledge
- ❖ Song of Blessing
- ❖ Dedicatory Prayer

Entrance of Families

Parents and children enter in an informal procession, each carrying their Bible. They may be seated at the front in the circle or reserved seats.

Plan a special song or piece of music to play as the families enter. (This may be the same as the song used later for the Song of Blessing.)

The Tradition of Blessing

This section of the program is meant to inspire participants with the value of the family blessing as it was done in Scripture and in more recent orthodox Jewish families.

The Old Testament patriarchs often blessed each one of their children, in addition to a special birthright blessing for the firstborn. (See Genesis 27 and 49) These blessings show the high regard and hopes the father had for his children and were pronounced with the utmost solemnity.

Orthodox Jews have continued this tradition of blessing right up into modern times. From infancy, children are to be brought to their father and mother on the Sabbath and Holy Days to receive a blessing. A weekly Sabbath blessing, often coming after the lighting of the Sabbath candles on Friday night is a valued part of Jewish family life.

In order to hold the children's interest, keep it short and simple and involve their senses through the use of visual aids, drama, or some other non-lecture type of presentation. The talk should be directed to the Adventurers and their parents rather than to the audience.

Readings from Scripture

Parents stand in a circle (or semi-circle if there is an audience) with their children directly in front of them.

Parents read in unison, Deuteronomy 6: 6,7. Then Adventurers read Ephesians 6:1- 3.

Affirmation of Value

Children turn toward their parents. Parents place one hand on the child's shoulder and read to their children a short (one to two page) letter of blessing which they have prepared beforehand and tucked into their Bibles. Use a microphone if necessary so parents can be easily heard.

The letter should include a description of three or four of the qualities the parent most appreciates in the child. At the end of the letter, parents should draw or glue a picture of an animal or object which represents, for them, the special qualities of their child. (For example, a parent may choose the sunshine because when their child is around, everyone feels bright and cheery.)

A sample parent letter, describing what is needed, is provided or you may introduce this concept to the parents at a parent meeting several weeks before the Family Blessing Service.

If there are a large number of Adventurers, consider having several affirmations read at various times during the service in order to keep the Adventurers and audience from becoming restless and inattentive.

Family Pledge

While still facing each other, families repeat the Family Pledge with assistance from the Adventurer leader. The Adventurer leader will read the part in bold type, and the parents (or children) will repeat the part in italics. (It might be helpful to have a parent or assistant use a microphone to lead the parents in their part of the pledge.)

Adventurers, you are growing to be such fine young boys and girls! Now that you are old enough to understand, your parents want you to know about the blessings they want to give you with God's help. Every person needs to know that they are loved. When God gave you to your parents, He gave them a very special person to love for the rest of their lives.

(child's name) , I pledge to you the blessing of my love, always, no matter what.

In order to grow, every person needs food and shelter. Every person needs to be taught how to live in a happy loving way.

(child's name) , I pledge to you the blessing of my help, in every way I can give it, so you can grow strong in Jesus.

Every child makes mistakes and needs to know that they are forgiven. Every parent makes mistakes too.

(child's name) , I pledge to you the blessing of forgiveness when you make mistakes and apologies when I make mistakes.

Adventurers, you are a very important part of your family. You have the power to help make your family a happy place or a sad place. Do you pledge to do your part to make your family a happy family?

We do.

At this point, invite any friend or family member who is willing to aid and support the Adventurer families in fulfilling their pledges to come forward and stand behind the families. Then invite all members of the church family who desire to support the pledges made during this service to stand.

We are not alone in our pledges. God has given us these members of our church family to support and stand behind us as we seek to bring a blessing for our families.

If there is no audience, invite the Adventurer parents and children to make one circle and hold hands during the song and prayer as symbol of mutual support.

Song of Blessing

Use one of the songs listed below or choose another song which the parents or families (and their supporters) can sing to affirm their blessing.

SDA Hymnal 653, "Lead Them My God to Thee"

He is Our Song 119, "Family"

Dedicatory Prayer

Ask the pastor to pray for God's blessing on these Adventurer families as they strive, in His power, to fulfill the pledges they have made.

Afterward

After the Family Blessing Service, the church may choose to celebrate and affirm the blessings which the Adventurer parents have chosen to bestow upon their children.

Some ways of affirming the Adventurer families are to:

- Give each family a plant to symbolize the growth they can make together in Jesus;
- Give each family a certificate of recognition and support, signed by the pastor of the church; or
- Host a celebration dinner or potluck for the Adventurer families.

In Advance

Prepare parents for the service by meeting with them and going over the parts of the service and their part in it. Ask all participants to bring New International Version Bibles or to copy the required texts on an index card to insert in their Bibles. Copy the program outline on nice paper the size of bulletin inserts so that it can be kept unobtrusively in the Bibles for use during the service and kept afterwards as a remembrance.

If the Family Blessing Service is to be done in front of an audience, reserve the front rows for the families involved. Otherwise, place chairs in a circle for the families.

Mark a circle or semicircle on the floor to help families know where to stand during the blessing service. Use masking tape, or plastic tape that is a similar color to the floor covering so it will not be easily noticeable.

Suggested Resources

Excellent information and background material on the family blessing may be found in *The Blessing* by Gary Smalley and John Trent. It is published by Thomas Nelson and may be found in most Christian bookstores.