

Teen Topics – Understanding Your Parents (Part 3) Leader's Guide

Intro statement for leader: So far, our series has looked at the responsibilities parents have within the home (to raise, train, and teach their children), as well as responsibilities teens have (to obey and honor their parents). In this lesson, we'll go a little deeper regarding struggles teens may have with obeying and honoring their parents and how they can handle those struggles. This lesson will offer principles that will help teens respond to their parents in a more positive way and move teens in a godly direction in regard to their attitude and behavior.

Lesson Objective: Students will explore biblical principles that offer insight on how to cultivate a good relationship between themselves and their parents and list out steps they can take to achieve that.

Intro discussion question: Select one of the following individuals and discuss with a partner what type of preparation (training, practice, experiences, etc.) would have been required for them to be successful. Then share with the group what a typical day might have looked like when they were putting in the effort to achieve success in their field:

- An Olympic athlete
- A medical doctor
- A concert musician

Discuss how each of these individuals would have put in a lot of time and energy to achieve the results they were after. Discuss how they also would have overcome obstacles along the way.

As we continue our series on understanding our parents, remember that success in many areas of life requires a focused plan that is able to overcome obstacles. This is true in successful relationships, including relationships with parents. Let's look at this now in Part 3 of our study.

In our previous lesson, we discussed the importance of showing honor and obedience at home. At this point, some of you may be thinking, "I can work on these things, but the fact remains that my parents still drive me crazy!" With that in mind, let's consider a few biblical principles that will help.

There are many reasons teens may give for why obeying their parents is difficult. Most reasons could be put into one of three categories:

- You are bitter toward your parents. They may have hurt or disappointed you or may have done something that you feel directly makes your life difficult. You may feel their parenting style is too harsh or not fair, or simply that your opinion isn't valued. Whatever it is, you feel hurt, and are now bitter. Your disrespect and disobedience, maybe even subconsciously, are your way of showing that you aren't happy with how things are, or they may be your way of getting even.
- You are critical of your parents. There may be things your parents do that annoy you, including personality quirks or habits that simply get on your nerves. This could be anything from singing in the car to their style of clothes. You might feel that they act differently in front of people compared to how they act at home. Whatever it may be, you have little respect for them and you use your behavior to show it.
- You simply choose not to obey. Teens in this category don't feel hurt or annoyed by their parents, they just don't take their parents seriously. They disobey because they don't feel like obeying. They may be lazy, or they may want to look tough, or they may feel they're in charge. They may have nothing against their parents, but when it comes to listening to them, obedience isn't a priority.

Can you relate to any (or all) of these? Relationships take effort between both people to be successful. This is true of every relationship you have now, and any relationship you'll have the rest of your life. Frustrations can spring up at any time, especially between you and someone you have to interact with a lot--like a parent! Let's take a look at some key Bible verses that can help with this issue.

Bible Verses on Strengthening Relationships

Frustrations can result from being around anyone too long! But they do not have to ruin our relationships. Consider what these verses say regarding frustrations we may have:

- > ***Matt. 7:1-5 – Don't be overly critical, we all have faults.***
- > ***Heb. 12:15 – Don't let bitterness build up/add more trouble.***
- > ***II Cor. 13:11 – Aim for restoration and live in peace.***
- > ***Rom. 12:18; 14:19 – Be intentional about making peace.***

Let's consider a few important points regarding each of these:

1. Don't be overly critical: It may be easy to find a million things that annoy us about our parents. But why make a big deal out of the little things? We all have quirks and annoying habits. Learn to look past those things. We don't need to let those insignificant things ruin the relationship, especially when there are many positive traits we could focus on.
2. Don't let bitterness ruin your relationship. If you find frustrations in the home, put into practice the multiple principles found in Scripture about dealing with people. Don't forget, your parents are people, and issues with people can be resolved!
3. Be intentional about making peace. Many of you know a great relationship with your parents is very attainable. You know your parents aren't the enemy. You know there are no major issues between you and them. So why allow a simple attitude of "I want to do my own thing" disrupt the amazing relationship you could have with your parents?

Discussion Questions:

- Do you find it easy to be critical of your parents?
- How can criticism damage the relationship you have with your parents?
- When annoyed or frustrated with your parents, what can you do to handle it correctly, as opposed to calling them out for it?

Doing Your Part to Maintain Harmony

If you have frustrations toward your parents that are clearly hurting the relationship, take an honest look at the following:

> Your parents are not perfect, nor will they ever be! You must embrace them for who they are, quirks and all! Instead of being overly critical about their clothes, style, jokes (etc.) that you may think are goofy, focus on their positive traits.

> Try having a good conversation with your parents! Express any concerns or issues you have with your parents and/or their parenting style. Open and honest conversations can do wonders for a relationship.

> Don't add to the problem. If you think your parents nag you about your messy room, clothing choices, grades, (etc.), realize there may be truth to what they say and listen!

Discussion Questions:

- Why is it important to remember that your parents aren't perfect and never will be (just like everyone else in the world)?
- Do you agree that many teens don't obey their parents simply because they don't want to? What is wrong with that attitude?
- What advice would you give to friends who are struggling to obey their parents?
- Why is it that open and honest conversations do wonders for a relationship? (Answers could include: they allow you to express your concerns instead of keeping them a secret; they let the other person know you have a problem--they can't do anything about it if they don't know; they allow the other person to explain the reasoning behind their actions; they open the door to work out compromises, etc.)

A good home life is achievable if each person is willing to take the right steps toward peace. The Scripture verses we looked at today give insight into how to live in peace with all people. If you're ever in a situation at home where you see conflict arising, do what you can to move things in a peaceful direction by following those biblical insights. God gave us those verses so we can enjoy peace with people, and your parents are definitely people God wants you to have peace with!

When frustration gets blown out of proportion, the conflict that results is never good! Your parents want peace in the home just as much as you do! Do your part in making peace!

Gospel: Philippians 2:4-8 shares how Jesus Christ put others before Himself, even to the point of humbly laying down His life for us. Let's be grateful for God's love and willingness to bring us salvation.

Summary: There may be specific issues that make honoring and obeying our parents difficult, but if we can keep our frustrations in check, we can focus on ways we can bring peace into our homes.

Challenge: Have the students list out specific ways they can modify their actions and attitudes to promote a healthy relationship with their parents. Have them think of appropriate ways to respond to situations they find challenging. Encourage the students to put one or two of them into action over the following week.