

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

Intro statement for leader: In this series we'll look at what is by far the most important relationship for a teenager outside of their relationship with Jesus Christ. The relationship a teen has with their parents shape how they view the world, how they view themselves, how they develop into an adult, and how they learn to interact with others. For these reasons, having a good parent-child relationship is key in the development of a teen. This series will challenge your students to see the relationship they have with their parents from both their own perspective and from their parents' perspectives. Allow this series to help your students better understand, value and appreciate their parents, and in turn, do their part to develop the kind of relationship God wants them to have with their parents. This intro lesson can be used to encourage your teens to examine and evaluate their home life, while beginning to shift their focus toward the ideal and enjoyable home environment that God desires for them to have.

* The leader guides in this series will regularly use the term "parents", but be aware that some of your students may not be living in a home with both of their biological parents. Be sensitive to such situations. It may be helpful to use a term such as "caregiver" as needed.

Lesson Objective: Students will begin to identify issues that create frustrations within their homes and start to consider ways they can help promote peace and harmony.

Intro discussion question: What would you say are the top three blessings of having parents and the top three frustrations that come with having parents? (Allow the students to acknowledge how parents can be a blessing, and also, without allowing your students to vent, allow them to share a few honest comments on the challenges of having parents.)

Today we'll begin the first in a series of lessons on the topic of understanding our parents. Whether we like to acknowledge it or not, studies have shown time and again that parents are the most significant relationship in the life of a teenager--more so than your best friends or even a significant other! The person you call mom and dad play a key role in your life, whether you like it or not! For that reason, it is important to examine what God intends this relationship between you and your parents to be and see where it meets that expectation and where it falls short. Let's begin

Our attitudes toward our parents can often be like a rollercoaster. One day we love them and think they are the greatest people in the world, and the next day we are frustrated at them thinking they are impossible to live with. We may dearly love our parents, yet at times we know the relationship we have with them is not as good as it can be!

The relationship with our mom and dad is a fascinating thing. They are the people who brought us into this world. They have shaped how we look, act and think. They have influenced our sense of humor and our opinion on a variety of topics. Even if you are in a situation where your birth mother and/or father no longer have an active role in your life, you can recognize the people who have taken on the parental role and consider how they are shaping you in these areas.

Despite this relationship being all-important, at times it can be the most unusual. Someone can say something about your mom and you're ready to fight, yet at home your mother may not fold your shirt just right and you want to yell at her. You used to try and convince the world your dad was the strongest man alive, now you try to convince people he's the most impossible person in the world to live with! These may be extreme, but can anyone relate?

Discuss: Does anyone here consider the relationship they have with their parents to be perfect? Would most agree the relationship could use some improvement? (Allow students who are willing to share their thoughts on how they would rate their relationship with their parents).

Maybe the issue you have is that you feel your parents are simply out of touch with what life is like for a teenager. Some of you may consider this to be the main problem with your parents. Consider this:

Thoughts about Mom and Dad

Have you ever had these thoughts toward your parents:

- > My parents treat me like I'm still a child!***
- > My parents are so old school it's embarrassing!***
- > My parents' rules are way too strict!***
- > My parents are hard to talk to; they don't listen to me!***

Some of these may sound familiar. Because of this you may think some of the following to yourself:

- It's hard to respect my parents when they treat me like this!
- I love my parents, but I sure don't like to listen to them.
- Their advice, sense of style and hobbies are so outdated.
- Being with my parents in public is often embarrassing!
- My friends are able to get away with a lot more than I am!

If these thoughts sound familiar to you, then you are not alone. Many teens have these kinds of thoughts, but that does not mean such thoughts should be embraced or accepted as normal. God clearly does not intend for there to be such frustrations within our families. Note what these verses say about the relationship between parents and teens:

- > Prov. 17:6 – Parents are a teenager's pride.
- > Psalms 127:3-5 – Children are a blessing from the Lord.
- > Prov. 6:20-23 – Parents can offer direction and protection, and they can be good for meaningful conversations.

Though we didn't have a choice in who our parents would be (or the individuals who are our caretakers), God did. And God has a lot to say about the relationship we have with them.

Let's take a moment and ask some honest questions regarding how to think through frustrations we may have with our parents.

- Do you think God is aware of the frustrations you have with your parents?
- Do you think God is able to understand your point of view and see why you feel the way you do?
- Do you think God wants and desires you to continually struggle with these kinds of thoughts, attitudes, and frustrations?

While we are being honest, we must be willing to admit there probably are frustrations our parents could have toward us as well. After all, your family is made up of imperfect people. This includes your parents, as well as yourself. The good news is that God has a plan for your family – a plan in which imperfect people live together in a way that

everyone gets along, and even learns and benefits from each other, rather than being filled with anger or frustrations.

Never forget, the family unit was something God designed, and He designed it to be something incredible!

God's Design for the Family

God has a high view of the family. Just as He intends a husband and wife to be a blessing to each other, He also intends parents and teens to be a blessing to each other! The relationship we have with our parents does not have to be a negative thing. Through this study, we will attempt to better understand our parents in hopes that we will better see them for who they are and learn how we can better relate to them!

Some of you may wonder if the home can really be a place where people can enjoy being around each other. If that's you, be sure to remember that a place full of imperfect people needs to be a place full of grace. Over the lessons to follow, let's try to understand our parents better, understand ourselves better, and consider how each of us can do our part in making the home what God intends it to be.

Gospel: John 1:12 says that those who receive and believe in Jesus are considered God's children. Being God's child is a blessing and a privilege. Let's be grateful that we are able to be a part of God's family.

Summary: There may be things that bring frustrations between us and our parents. Through this series, let's determine to understand our parents and ourselves better, so that we can graciously do our part in making our homes peaceful.

Challenge: Have each student do a quick survey to uncover insights into how they view their parents. Focus on three key questions:

1. If I could tell my parents anything, I would let them know...
2. I wish my parents understood this about me...
3. I wish my parents understood this about my generation...

Have students anonymously submit their answers through a simple form or slip of paper. The results of the survey could be a great benefit to share with parents and to give you a few additional topics to address as you see best over the course of this series.