

Godly Living

Lesson 4—Dealing with Family*

OVERVIEW

Primary Bible Passages: Ephesians 6:2-3 and Colossians 3:20

Key Verses: Romans 12:18, James 1:19, Proverbs 18:32, Proverbs 15:1-2, and 1 Peter 3:9

BEFORE CLASS

Preparation: *Your preparation will determine the direction your class will go.*

- Consider family conflicts you faced as a youth.
- Consider God's plan for the family.
- Study and prepare your lesson so that you are familiar with the teaching outline.
- Pray for each student by name.
- Use the Contact 1-2-3 system to the right to follow up on students who have recently missed on Sunday morning.
- Pray for each student by name.

CONTACT 1-2-3 SYSTEM

CONTACT 1--The first time a student is absent, give him a call.

CONTACT 2--Following the second absence, send him a postcard.

CONTACT 3-- The third week they are absent, pay him a visit.

THINK ABOUT IT: What does it say to a student when they miss multiple weeks in a row and are never contacted? It says, "It really doesn't matter if you're here or not." Small things communicate great messages. Let the three "small" things above communicate that you care and miss your students when they are absent.

OPENING ACTIVITY

Discussion Questions

- *What do you think the perfect family would look like?*
- *If you were to choose a TV family that you feel your family is most like, who would they be. (Ideas might include: Leave it to Beaver, 7th Heaven, Rosanne, The Simpsons, The Cosby Show, Full House, etc.) Why?*
- *What do you think are some major issues that families face?*

- *What are some major issues of conflict in your family? (i.e., “My parents are overstrict,” money, “My parents fight a lot,” etc.)*
- *Do you sometimes find it difficult to communicate with members of your family and tell them exactly how you feel? What might be some reasons that we struggle to share what we really feel and blurt out something hurtful instead?*

Consider these reasons:

- (1) Some things are hard to say. It’s hard to say, “I’m sorry,” or “I was wrong.” It’s also hard sometimes to admit, “I’m afraid” (of a situation), etc.
 - (2) We feel embarrassed about how we feel or we don’t want to feel exposed and vulnerable if we share our real feelings.
 - (3) It’s risky to share what we really feel because we take the chance that someone might hurt us or use our feelings against us.
 - (4) Sometimes we want to get back at our parents or “sting” them with our words.
 - (5) Some people use a smokescreen—an argument or conflict that avoids dealing with the real issues.
 - (6) Sometimes we have trouble communicating with our parents because we are frustrated. We don’t know what else to say or do and we feel we don’t have a way to appeal what we might perceive as unfair treatment.
- *Do you agree with all of these reasons? Do you think that parents sometimes hide behind these same reasons? (The answer is yes. Sometimes parents struggle with expressing what they really feel too.)*
 - *What do you think you could do to help your family have a healthier home?*

SAY: You can’t control everything that comes into your family and you can’t always avoid conflicts, but today let’s take a look at the things you can do to help your family have a healthier home and how you should respond when conflicts arise.

BIBLE LESSON

Choose two volunteers to read—Read Ephesians 6:2-3 and Colossians 3:20

SAY: These verses tell us to treat our parents (or those filling the role of a parent for us) with honor and obedience.

- *What reasons does God give for commanding us to honor and obey our parents? (“That it may go well with you and that you may have long life on the earth” and “for this pleases the Lord.”)*
- *Does this mean that you have to honor parents who aren’t honorable and don’t deserve your respect?*

Consider the following conclusions based on the verses you just read:

- (1) Honor is commanded even if parents are not honorable. God didn't say, "Honor your father and mother if they deserve it..."
- (2) You honor them because of the role God has given them in your life.
- (3) If you honor your parents, God promises a blessed life.
- (4) Obedience is commanded in "everything." However, you are never commanded to obey a parent when doing so violates God's commands. We must always choose God first but this cannot be used as an excuse to create a reason to disobey our parents either.

KEY VERSE

- Think about your family for a minute. Just answer this to yourself—*When conflicts arise, how do different family members respond. Are some screamers? Do others cry? Do any get real quiet and try to escape the conflict by leaving the room or the house? How do you respond?*

Choose a volunteer to read—Read Romans 12:18

- *If everyone in your house followed the advice of this verse, how do you think it might change your family?*

SAY: Once a conflict breaks out and people start to scream, the hope for a constructive solution ends. It is important to keep your cool when arguments begin in order to avoid the regret, hurt and damage that might result from things being said that we don't really mean—things said in the "heat of the moment." (NOTE: This would be a good place for you to share a situation where you had a conflict with a parent and how you handled it, whether right or wrong, and what you learned from the situation.)

SAY: God has called you to be a peacemaker. Consider the following steps you can use to help create peace in the middle of conflicts:

(1) GET CLARIFICATION:

Sometimes we argue without even knowing what we are arguing about or start trying to solve problems before we even identify what's really wrong. The result is that you end up arguing about nothing but bringing up everything you can to prove your side right.

(2) GET TO THE REAL ISSUE:

Even when you figure out what the problem is, the chances are it's only the surface-level of a much deeper problem. Look for the root of "What's really going on here?"

Here's an example of what might happen if you dig for a deeper meaning:

Let's say your mom says that you're inconsiderate. Immediately you're ready for a fight because you feel like she's bashing you and you want to bash back.

But dig a little deeper. Ask, "Why do you feel that way?" It's because you

always stay out late and never call to let her know where you are. Ask why again—“Why does that bother you?” The answer, “Because I love you and I get worried sometimes about your safety.” Do you see how digging for the root of the problem can help to avoid a fight

Here’s an example of what might happen if you don’t dig deeper:

Your mom says that you’re inconsiderate. Immediately you fire back, “I’m not the inconsiderate one—You are! You’re always cutting me down. You never care how I feel!” Where do you think this will lead?

(3) GET OPEN ABOUT HOW YOU FEEL:

Share your heart and what you’re really feeling inside and be careful with how you share it. Instead of “you” statements (“You don’t trust me!”), use “I” statements. (“When you do that, I don’t feel trusted.”) One is much less aggressive than the other.

- *How open and honest do you feel you can be with your parents?*
- *What is the worst that could happen if you lovingly and respectfully told them how you really feel?*

(4) GET READY TO LISTEN—Get ready to listen and don’t become defensive and just react. Become a listener who is slow to anger:

Choose volunteers to read the follow verses: **James 1:19, Proverbs 18:32, Proverbs 15:1-2, and 1 Peter 3:9**

- *What actions or behaviors do these verses provide to help us during conflicts?*

(5) REMEMBER PARENTS ARE HUMAN—Parents can make mistakes too. Parents aren’t perfect and sometimes they make bad choices, but God has called you to honor, obey, and even forgive them if they make a mistake.

Choose two volunteers to read—**Read Colossians 3:15 and Hebrews 12:15**

- *Why is it so important for you to choose the way of forgiveness?*

WRAP IT UP

SAY: Here’s the point: If you treat your parents as God instructs and respond to conflicts as God commands, you will take major steps toward making things better at home. You start by choosing to treat your parents with obedience (unless they want you to go against God) and honor because of the role God has given them in your life. You must also choose to forgive them for making mistakes and sometimes hurting or failing you. Try this over a period of time and watch the change!

Prayer Time

Pray specifically today that your students will be peacemakers in their families.

List prayer requests below and on the back of this page and pray for your students throughout the week. *Ask if any of your students want to pray today.*

Prayer Requests

*This lesson is based in part on “Flood Volume 1, Lesson 4: Family Funk” (Nashville, TN: Serendipity House, 2005), 51-62.