

## The Relationship Series: Week 3 Devotions

In week 3 of the Relationship Series we explored the relationships with our parents.

### Day One

#### Read:

39 Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

40 Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Couldn’t you men keep watch with me for one hour?” he asked Peter. 41 “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

42 He went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.” \_ [Matthew 26:39-42]

#### Explore:

We see in verse 39, that Jesus was begging God to take away his load, (our sins that he was carrying on the cross of calvary). Begging! Doesn’t that sound familiar? “But dad I don’t wanna do that!”

Then we see that Jesus says, “Yet not as I will, but as you will.” Then in verse 42 we see Jesus asking again. Doesn’t that sound familiar as well? Daaaaaad, ummmm do I realllly have to do that?

For me this passage shows Jesus honouring and obeying His Fathers will. Like can you imagine your dad asking you to go die for the worlds sins? I can’t but Jesus honoured his Fathers will.

In my live I’ve struggled with doing stuff the way my parents want me to do it. With my dad being a perfectionist, but then one day when I was reading that passage. I realized that if I want to be like Christ I need to apply this verse to my life. I needed to obey my parents because they know what’s best for me. Now looking back that all the times I had to do stuff perfectly, I appreciate the lessons I’ve learnt from my dad.

The encouragement I’ve had is that God is my Heavenly Father and if He knows me perfectly then He’s gonna show my dad how to/what I need to learn.

#### Apply:

I encourage you; no matter how much it feels like your parents don’t know you or don’t love you. They do. Sometimes they struggle to understand us but they want what’s best for us. This week instead of thinking agggghhh I don’t want to do that or Why do I have to do it? Think there must be a reason why they want me to do this, and if you don’t want to do it... ask God to help you obey and honour your parents.

#### Pray:

Dear God, thank You that You gave us Jesus the ultimate example of a child obeying his father. Thank you Lord that you’ve given me loving and caring parents. Please help me obey and honour my parents. Help me to be cheerful when doing stuff I don’t want to do. In Jesus Name Amen!

### Day Two

#### Read:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. [Ephesians 6:1-4 NIV]

God did not place you into the family that you are in right now by mistake – He never makes mistakes. In fact, it's in his perfect plan and he knows that the family and parents he has chosen for you will help to breed the character within you that he will use for his purpose.

He says to honour our parents for it is right –even when it seems like they don't deserve it. This is the first commandment with a promise, and I feel like that's a bargain. You get long life from list honouring and obeying your parents?

At times it might be hard to hold onto our end of the deal, because parents do make mistakes and they do (at times unintentionally hurt us or disappoint us). They are still our parents though, and they brought us onto this planet – as hard as it might seem we still need to respect and honour our parents.

God sees, when we are hurt and he is a father to us all, and he unconditionally loves us. He hears prayers as well, and when we pray for him to change the hearts of the parents that do hurt us – He listens.

I know because I haven't always had the best of relationships with my father but I see the change that God has been making in his life. And I see the relationship that's forming between us as well, slowly and gradually. (because of forgiveness and prayer) Don't give up on your parents because you will miss them when they are gone.

## Challenge

Forgive your parents if they have wronged you.

## Prayer

Pray for a heart of forgiveness.

## Day Three

### How You Should Respond When Your Parents Hurt You by Veronica Neffinger

As sinners, we all make mistakes. Parenting is no exception. As young people, there will likely come a time when we realize some of our parents' faults are having a negative effect on our lives, and that fact can cause resentment and anger.

We've all likely had a moment in which we vowed, "When I have kids, I will never do that to them. I will never say this to them, I will never let them feel that way."

And perhaps we won't, but our kids, too, will (or are) being affected by our own set of faults, whether these are the same or different than those of our parents.

Jared Vogt in his article for Relevant Magazine titled "So, Your Parents Let You Down. Now What?" addresses this issue of how to deal with having been hurt by your parents and how to work toward healing possible strained relationships.

Vogt first acknowledges point blank that our parents will mess us up. "They have. They did. They will. There is no such thing as perfect people. There has only ever been one perfect person, and they aren't Him."

Vogt also wants you to know if you have felt hurt by your parents (and we all have at some point), that hurt is valid. Your pain is real and should be acknowledged.

But that's not where it ends. You are your own person who has been gifted with freewill by God and you get to choose how to respond to what life circumstances have dealt you. Deciding to remain a victim or to harbor unforgiveness really just hurts yourself.

Vogt talks about unforgiveness this way: "It's like drinking poison and hoping the other person dies."

"There are no other alternatives: which will you choose: forgiveness or unforgiveness?" he continues.

Forgiveness is the first step to healing a broken relationship. And truly, we don't even have it in us to take that first step without the Lord's help. But through Christ, we can be granted the grace to forgive.

Forgiveness paves the way for reconciliation. Although forgiveness can be undertaken in the quietness of your own heart, reconciliation requires two (or three) people. Because of this, if your parents are unwilling to also acknowledge their sinfulness and failures, and to take a stance of humility and offer grace, reconciliation may not be possible, but God still requires us to attempt it: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all," says Romans 12:18.

This whole process will assuredly require a great commitment to prayer. But trust that God can heal what is broken, and that forgiveness is the best path, whatever the outcome.

It's also important, writes Vogt, that once a relationship is restored, you set boundaries. It's okay to agree not to talk about a topic that tends to lead to argument or to avoid situations that make it easier for old patterns of behavior to emerge again.

God desires that we have a loving relationship with our parents and that we are thankful for them, no matter what. And while a complete reconciliation of a broken relationship may not be possible, God still requires us to let go of bitterness and to have grace.

"Your parents weren't trained in parenting. They aren't professionals. Don't be only a 'taker' in this relationship. If you sincerely desire to follow Jesus, you will have to look for ways to minister to your parents in their brokenness, because that is what the Gospel does: It changes us all," writes Vogt.

Reflect

How can you begin mending a strained or broken relationship with your parents?

How can you rely on God to help you do so?

## **Day Four**

Explore:

God is an awesome parent, who wants a great relationship with His children. We see this in Jeremiah 33:3. Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.' What an awesome example of a Dad wanting connection with His Children.'

I love fetching Drew from school and hearing all about what happened in his day. About the new connections his made and I even am happy when he shares the not so good things with me.

Then while I'm making dinner he will just come and put his arms around my shoulders probably to see what's for dinner but we start to chat and if I'm lucky he will offer help. We then talk about my day and it's just so natural - not forced and I know he cares about my stuff. It's not just all about himself.

All parents want their kids to make an effort to connect. Believe it or not we as parents don't always know how much is the right amount of connecting. We don't want to snoop but if we don't ask then our kids think we don't care. And if we ask toooooo many questions then we are interfering and nosy! It's hard being a parent!

#### Challenge:

When you next see your parents ask them how their day was. Be sincere! And maybe tell them something about your day. It will make theirs. Try it!

## **Day Five**

Read: "Honour your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the Lord your God is giving you." (Exodus 20:12)

### How to Live by This Commandment

There are several ways you can begin living by this commandment:

Be fair. Your parents are people just like you. They are not perfect. They make mistakes. Be fair to your parents before you jump to conclusions.

Think before you speak. It's easy to just say what's on your mind to your family. Sometimes we speak harsher words than we should because we don't always feel like we have to filter out what we say to our family. However, words can be hurtful.

Talk things out with them. We want to make the best decisions possible, so when we have an issue with our parents or even one that we're facing in our lives, sometimes it helps to talk things out with our parents. It allows parents to know how you're thinking and gives them a chance to weigh in with their life experience. It also helps your relationship to talk to them about what's going on in your life.

Remind them you care. It's so easy to take your family for granted. We think they'll always be there. Yet sooner than later we find that our time with our parents is far too short. Take some time to remind your parents that you love them.

## **Day Six**

See Yourself As God Sees You by [Josh McDowell]

For good or bad, we inherit our initial perception of our identity from those who should love us the most: our parents.

God's optimum design begins with parents who fully commit to loving God and one another. This couple then becomes the primary conduit of God's love for their children. As the children receive their loving care, absorb biblical instruction, and observe their parents' godly example, they are able to view themselves through the lens of God's grace.

But many of us didn't grow up in this environment.

If our parents held negative evaluations of themselves, us, and God, it was impossible for us to come to trust in God's unconditional love for us. Young teens have no clear picture of who they are apart from the input they receive. They see themselves through the eyes of their caretakers. And they typically view themselves through the lens of their most dominant caretaker. Teens who are repeatedly told that they are lacking accept that evaluation, and tend to live it out, unless other people come into their life and help them to see themselves as God does. We all need people to think about us and safely convey appropriate care, interest, concern, and support for us.

We all desire and need recognition, for others to notice the good that exists in us. As a teen, I can remember asking my mom why she ignored the "A"s on my report card, to hone in on the one "C+." Her reply: "It's a given that I expect you to be capable of an A in every subject. So why should I need to commend you on getting one?" My motivation to please my mom took a nosedive. I mean, what was the point of trying, if every time I failed to achieve perfection I was going to be made to feel stupid for it?

A teen who always hears, "I know you can do it, sweetheart," will have the courage to take risks.

A teen who always hears that she never measures up will approach every obstacle in life with fear. Another side effect: that teen is likely to dump criticism and judgement on other people, from learning the pattern from her parents.

Teens model their parents' behavior—good or bad—even if they recognize that it's hurtful.

What young children don't realize is that their parents' view of them is entirely subjective. It may NOT be truth, even though the child starts to believe it is. Because a parent can only model what she or he is capable of giving. So if parents see God's light clearly in themselves, they'll be able to share and shine that light on their children. But if they are living with a shadowy self-portrait, they will drive their children into the shadows as well.

If you feel disadvantaged because of a background devoid of God's light, don't let that discourage you.

God uses ALL circumstances in our lives, the good and the bad, to prepare us for what He will do in us and through us. Everything that happens to us is an occasion for God to exercise His comfort us. And to prepare us to have the ability to comfort others.

God completely accepts me (Colossians 1:21-22).

He deeply loves me (1 John 4:9-10)

He fully forgives me (Romans 5:1).

God is working for my good in all things (Romans 8:28).

Some days, in the rough and raw moments, it can be challenging to believe that God truly is working for our good. That He can bring beauty out of ashes. But God always keeps His promises!

## **Day Seven**

### His Perfect Will

A relationship with your parents is very vital, and so important. As we grow older, we'll begin to see that our perspective on parents changes. Where we used to see them as annoying and unbearable, judgmental etc, you will need them to help you out with particular issues in your life.

The guardians that God has placed in your life are your biggest fans and want to see you succeed above all this. It can be hard to form relationships with rather strict parents but we have to speak up and voice how we feel. Try to understand where they are coming from, and how you are clashing. Engage with them, in any way possible.

As a child, I would always write letters to my parents (who were super strict at that time) and express to them how I felt or voice out my opinions. I knew they would fully listen without interruption, eventually I had to grow out of it and learn to speak to them.

God values family, it is in his perfect picture and he wants to see families restored. He wants to see our relationship with parents restored. He wants oneness and it honestly starts with you.

### Prayer:

Lord, I come before you... Just as I am and I lay myself at your feet. I pray for my family, that you may strengthen it and may you help us all connect and relate with ease. May you turn us into a strong unit so as to glorify your name. In Christ's name I pray. Amen.