

BIBLE STUDY: Family Conflicts

by Katie Gosswein

Resolving or Dissolving

This study can be adapted for use with a parent/teenage group or simply as a teenage Bible study group. Use your best judgment in what would work most effectively, keeping in mind the need for a trusting and caring environment in which people will be able to share comfortably.

Objectives

That, with the help of the Spirit, parents and young people will

- see family conflict as a natural occurrence and process, which reflects our sinful nature;
- rely on god's grace and forgiveness in Christ to resolve their conflicts;
- come to a better understanding of and higher sensitivity to others' needs.

Introduction

Family conflict is fact, not fiction, and will continue, rather than disappear, because even as Christians we still have our sinful human nature. But thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ we have God's forgiveness and His own love to enable us to combat our sinful nature and to resolve family conflicts.

Our prayerful purpose for the next few minutes is to recognize particular conflicts in our life and to open the lines of communication for God's Word to speak to us.

Materials

Participants will each need a Bible, pencil, copy of "Agree-Disagree Questionnaire," question sheet, newsprint, marker and worship service sheet.

Warming Up

To help participants see the natural differences and the variety of opinions which can arise when studying parent/teen relations, set up a continuum line. Use a hallway or one side of the room where people can move freely. On one end of the room or hall, place a sign that reads, "far left," on the other end, a sign that reads, "far right." Place a third sign that reads, "middle," in the middle between the two extreme signs. Have the participants move to indicate their response to the following statements:

1. When Mom or Dad asks, "What did you do last night?" they really are...
 - suspicious of what you were doing. (move left)
 - expressing their care and interest. (move right)
2. Youth, growing up today, have it...
 - much easier than their parents did. (move left)
 - much harder than their parents did. (move right)
3. When raising a family in this day and age, parents need to be...
 - open-minded and permissive. (move left)
 - close-minded and strict. (move right)
4. When deciding on what to wear for church...
 - teens should make their own decisions. (move left)
 - parents should make the decision. (move right)

You may wish to add other statements which are reflective of your particular community and situation. It is not necessary to spend much time on each one, but rather move fairly quickly through them so as not to distract from your purpose for the night.

Bible Study

Divide into mixed parent/teen groups of four to six people each. Provide each group with Bibles, "Agree-Disagree Questionnaire," question sheet, and pencils. Ask each group to appoint their own leader/facilitator.

Agree-Disagree Questionnaire

Agree Disagree

- | | | |
|-------|-------|---|
| _____ | _____ | 1. Arguments act as a destructive force that tears apart the relationship between parent and teen. |
| _____ | _____ | 2. Teenagers should be able to be responsible for the hours they keep and their own schedule. |
| _____ | _____ | 3. When an argument seems to be developing, the best course of action is to remain silent and leave. |
| _____ | _____ | 4. Parents are responsible to provide clothes, food, shelter and a college education for their child. |
| _____ | _____ | 5. Most of the problems that occur between parents and teens are because parents fail to listen and try to understand the teen point of view. |
| _____ | _____ | 6. Teenagers will take on more responsibility when they are ready to do so—not because they feel pressured. |
| _____ | _____ | 7. It is all right to modify the truth if you are trying to protect others from worrying. |
| _____ | _____ | 8. Parents should be able to share their opinion about whom their son or daughter should date. |
| _____ | _____ | 9. Most of the problems that occur between parents and teens are because the teens fail to be patient and listen to their parents' reasoning. |
| _____ | _____ | 10. A teenager should have the right to look and dress the way he or she likes—even when the parents is paying for the clothes. |
| _____ | _____ | 11. Parents are not perfect. Therefore, a teenager should be entitled to decide what to obey and what not to obey. |
| _____ | _____ | 12. Teenagers should have the choice of participating in family events such as vacations and holidays. |

Question Sheet

1. Take a few moments to individually respond to the comments on your “Agree-Disagree Questionnaire” and, after doing so, share your responses.
 - What were the areas of agreement? Of disagreement?
 - Were there any responses that surprised you? Why?
 - Choose one or two of the statements you would like to concentrate on for the following study.
2. There are probably a lot of psychological ways to explain our differences as parents and teens, but the Bible gives one clear answer. Take a moment to read Romans 3:22b-25 and 1 John 1:6-10.
 - In the context of these verses, what are some of the things you share in common with your parents?
 - How does this affect your relationship?
 - When referring back to the statements, how has Paul’s concept of sin been present? When thinking back to specific situations, were they mostly one-sided arguments or more of a shared responsibility?
3. Sometimes it seems like we can get caught in a power struggle over who will have control of a situation. Getting caught up in who was “right or wrong” or who was “justified in what they did,” makes it easy to lose track of the real issue. Read Romans 12:1-6, 9-13.
 - What does it mean to “offer your bodies as living sacrifices”?
 - How is such a transformation reflected in your life?
 - In the context of your earlier statements, what gifts and new conclusions can you bring to those situations?
4. After having a chance to reflect over certain instances, within the framework of God’s Word, it is interesting how different things can look. In Colossians 3:1-13, Ephesians 4:32 and 1 Peter 4:8, we are reminded of the greatest gift our Christ-centered relationships have. Take a moment to read these passages and any others which are special to you regarding forgiveness.
 - Why is forgiveness such an important factor in a Christian relationship?
 - How does the act of forgiveness shape the future of the relationship?
 - When thinking back to your particular situations, how can or how has the action of forgiving and reconciling in Christ made your relationship into a “new creation”?

The Word of God is always a good place to find very practical knowledge. The following Scripture passages provide excellent suggestions for improving family communications, which you may want to take time to study during your private time this week.

James 1:19

Romans 14:13

James 5:16

Romans 13:13

Ephesians 4:15, 25

Proverbs 15:23

Philippians 2:1-4

Galatians 6:1

Ephesians 4:26, 31

Colossians 3:9

Proverbs 29:20

1 Peter 2:23

Devotion

Distribute copies of this devotion. Ask participants to hold it in their left hand, leaving their right hand free for the activity in the litany. Form a circle.

Invocation

- Leader: We begin in the name of God the Father, our Creator.
Response: For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works as we relate to one another in our families.
Leader: In the name of the Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Brother.
Response: Who said, “Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.” (Mark 3:35)
Leader: In the name of the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier.
Response: Who brought us into the family of God through faith in Christ, our Redeemer, and who daily renews and restores our communion with others.

Scripture Readings

Psalm 19

1 John 1:7-11 or 1 John 4:7-21

Song

Litany

- Leader: We stand here symbolizing one body in Christ Jesus, our Lord.
Response: Yet at times we pull away...seeking our own way...our own life. (Turn away from the circle, facing outward.)
Leader: But “if one part suffers, every part suffers with it.” (1 Corinthians 12:26)
Response: We look to return. We seek after a right relationship. We turn... (Make a quarter turn to the right, racing the back of the person next to you.)
Leader: “The body is not made up of one part but of many.” (1 Corinthians 12:14)
Response: One in baptism...one in Christ...seeking to bear one another’s burdens...striving in communion together. (Place your right hand on the shoulder of the person in front of you.)
Leader: “Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it.” (1 Corinthians 12:27)

Closing Song

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