

Dealing with Wayward Parents

Jim Newheiser

I. Introduction.

II. What responsibilities do adult children have to their parents? Ex. 20:12

- A. Small children should obey their parents unless the parents tell the child to sin. Eph. 6:1-3 Acts 5:29 Luke 2:51-52
- B. Independent adults are no longer in subjection to their parents. 1 Co. 13:11 Eph. 6:1-4
1. When you get married you establish a new independent family. Gen. 2:24
 2. Single adults are “of age” and are responsible for their own choices in life, including marriage. John 2:3ff 9:19-21 Num. 32:11 14:28-32 1 Co. 7:32-34,39
 3. Over-controlling parents often exasperate their adult children. Col. 3:21
- C. What are the responsibilities of an adult child who is dependent upon his parents?
1. You and your parents have to work out what is reasonable. Pr. 6:5ff 10:4 20:13 28:19 1 Thess. 5:7 2 Thess. 3:10 2 Tim. 2:22 Heb. 13:4
 2. You should be grateful to God and your parents for the help they offer you – you are not entitled. Pr. 30:17
 3. Now that you are an adult, you are always free to try to find a better situation -- You don't have to live under their roof and rules. Luke 15:11ff
 4. They are also free to make you leave if you refuse to live by their rules. Pr. 26:3
 5. There should be a plan/purpose for your living at home. Prov. 21:5
- D. As an adult child, you should still honor your parents (and grandparents).
1. Treat them with respect. Prov. 23:22 *Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old.*
 2. Jesus explicitly teaches that the fifth commandment still applies to adult children. Mt. 15:1-9 Exod. 20:12
 3. Ensure that their material needs are met. 1 Tim. 5:4,8
 4. Honor them by investing in the relationship. Prov. 1:8
 5. What if your spouse doesn't want you to be around your parents? Acts 5:29

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III. Adult children often face significant challenges dealing with their parents.

A. General principles

1. The Lord comes first – don't honor your family above Christ. 1 Sa. 2:29 Mt. 10:37ff
2. Your marriage comes next – don't let your parents come between you and your spouse. Gen. 2:24
3. There are many situations in which you have no control over their bad choices.
4. You may have to let them experience the consequences of their foolishness. Gal. 6:7
5. Their root problem may be not their morality, but their lostness. 1 Co. 6:9ff Isa. 53:6
6. Don't stop loving them, even if they treat you as an enemy. Mt. 5:43f

B. How should you relate to parents who have deeply hurt you in the past?

1. Christ has delivered you from their sinful ways. 1 Pet. 1:18 1 Co. 10:13
2. Some past sins should be overlooked. 1 Pet. 4:8 Prov. 19:11
3. Some past sins may need to be confronted. Mt. 18:15ff Gal. 6:1ff
4. Some past sins may have ongoing consequences.
5. Remember God's Fatherly love for you. 1 Jo. 4:10 Ps. 103:13 Rom. 8:31-32 8:15-16 Psalm 23 Isa. 49:13-16
6. Seek godly examples/mentors in the church. 1 Th. 2:7-12

C. What should you do when your parents try to draw you into their conflicts? Pr. 26:17 *Like one who takes a dog by the ears is he who passes by and meddles with strife not belonging to him.*

1. Some parents are in constant conflict – bickering and quarreling about everything.
2. What if your parents separate or divorce and try to force you to take sides?
3. What if one of your parents is in an improper romantic relationship with the opposite sex or even the same sex?
4. Disagreement does not mean that you must end the relationship – do what you can to show them love without compromising truth and righteousness.
5. You will face some hard decisions. – holidays and family events.

D. How and when should financial help be offered to your parents? 1 Tim. 5:5 Mt. 15:1-9

1. As long as your parents are able to provide for themselves they should. 2 Thess. 3:10
2. You are not responsible to enable their foolish irresponsibility. Pr. 21:17 22:17 6:1ff
3. You may have to offer limited help on your terms, not theirs.
4. If they move in with you, they must respect your family rules. Gen. 2:24

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- E. What should you do when your parents create potential quarrels and conflicts within your family? Rom. 12:18
1. Parents who are extremely critical and controlling of you.
 2. Parents who mistreat your spouse. Gen. 2:24
 3. Parents who mistreat your children.
 4. Parents who don't respect your rules and standards with your children. Gal. 6:1-2
 5. Parents who may be a bad influence on your children – entertainment, language, lifestyle choices. 1 Co. 7:14
 6. Parents who don't embrace their God-given roles as parents and grandparents.
 7. Parents who don't act their age.
 8. Parents who enable sinful siblings.
 9. Parents who show favoritism – to a grandchild or a sibling.
- F. Apply the PAUSE principle in peacemaking (from *The Peacemaker*).
1. Prepare for peacemaking. James 1:5,19
 2. Affirm relationships.
 3. Understand their interests. Phil. 2:3-4 Prov. 18:13,15,17
 4. Search for creative solutions. Dan. 1
 5. Evaluate options objectively.
 6. Do you have “passport” with your parents? Prov. 16:23-24 9:8 Mt. 7:6
- G. Further biblical wisdom for addressing their sins.
1. Try to understand the root cause of their sin. James 4:1ff Mark 7:21-23
 2. How can you decide when to confront and when to overlook sin? 1 Pet. 4:8 Prov. 19:11 Gal. 6:1 Mt. 18:15ff
 3. Choose wisely how you confront them. Prov. 15:1 25:11
 4. Seek wise counsel. Prov. 11:14 15:22
 5. You may need to place limitations on the relationship for the sake of your family.
 6. Sin sometimes has consequences. You may have to let them go. Gal. 6:7 Prov. 26:3
 7. Even in extreme cases, do not entirely shun them – Do what you can to show them love without compromising truth and righteousness.

IV. Conclusion. Prov. 29:25 Jer. 17:5-8