



Parents – Who'd Have Them? Outline Plan



Aim/s - select

- To be encouraged by knowing that even Jesus had misunderstandings with his parents.
- To help them to understand their parents better
- To help them think about how to improve their relationship with their parents if necessary.

Bible references

Luke 2:40-52

Resources / Starters

Board/ flip chart; paper, pens; Bibles

<http://961joyfm.com/if-a-mom-sang-let-it-go-from-frozen-video>

[Missing Boy Found in Temple](#)

[Activity Ideas for Family Issues](#) This has plenty of ideas for starters, games and other interactive ideas that can be used at different points during the session. For this theme we recommend:

- Bible parents
- Does anyone have any relatives who...?
- The Mom song or the Mom job description

Programme

The session could divide into 4 parts. Choose your own order according to the type of group you have.

1. Identify your own family atmosphere and issues
2. Jesus in the Temple – story & discussion
3. What's it like on the other side of the fence?
4. We can't change others so what can **we** do to improve things at home?

1. Identify your own family atmosphere and issues

Confidentiality agreement

This part of the session could involve members of the group talking about personal details concerning their families, so establish an agreement within the group that anything that is said will not be discussed outside of the group. Tell them that you will always keep information confidential unless it concerns a matter of their personal safety.

Parental characteristics

Over-protective	Ambitious	Permissive
Under – protective	Easy going	Other?
Controlling	Critical	
Interfering	Perfectionist	
Disinterested	Authoritarian	
Materialistic	Negligent	

- What type of parent/s & family atmosphere do you have?
- What do you find helpful/unhelpful about that?
- Why do parents relate differently to different children? Is it favouritism?

Discussion suggestions

- What issues do parents and teens usually quarrel over?
- Why do you think this is so?
- Is anyone involved trying to be deliberately difficult?
- Why should we listen to parents - they're not always right?
- What sort of parent do you think you would make? How would you parent differently?
- What are the main areas of conflict between you and your parents?
- Why do you think that is?

2. Jesus in the Temple – story & discussion

Even Christian families have their share of misunderstandings and upsets. Read the story account of Jesus being lost in Jerusalem – [Missing Boy Found in Temple](#)

Discussion suggestions

- Why do you think the misunderstanding occurred?
- Why do you think it took Mary & Joseph so long to find Jesus?
- Was anyone really to blame?

Alternatively

Read the story from the Bible then split the group up so that they can look at the situation from different points of view e.g. Mary, Joseph, a Rabbi, a supporting friend, 12 year old Jesus. Each group reports back their point of view. Then discuss who was right/wrong or whether it was just a misunderstanding.

3. What's it like to be a parent?

The 'Mom job description' could work well at this point. See [Activity Ideas for Family Issues](#) Or http://961joyfm.com/if-a-mom-sang-let-it-go-from-frozen-video/?trackback=fbshare_top

Interview and/or drama

Either arrange to interview someone who is a parent or write an amusing drama sketch along these lines. We did something that was a combination of the two. It needs to be planned carefully beforehand.

Ask questions such as ...

- How did you feel about becoming a parent?
- Was it different to how you expected?
- What is difficult about being a parent?
- What is nice about being a parent?

Drama idea 2

'Shock Tactics, a Flash from the Future'¹ by Scripture Union has an amusing, drama script. It is based on the idea of role reversal, where two teenagers are telling their parents off for being late home, wearing the wrong clothes, mixing with the wrong people, and so on. Maybe some of you or your older young people could write something similar. ¹ Try looking on Amazon

4. We can't change others so what can we do to improve things at home?

Activity suggestions

Ask them to complete the following sentences

- I feel that my Mum/Dad loves me when
- I hate it when my Mum/Dad
- I get irritated when my Mum/Dad

Different people express love in different ways. (See background notes)

Identify any ways in which your parents show you that they love you.

How do you show love to your parents?

Different people get wound up by different things.

What we believe about a situation affects how we feel about it. Look at some of the issues that have been raised in section 2 and see if

- a) we can either understand the other person's point of view better
- b) the group can suggest other ways of interpreting the situation

Think of some scenarios – how would you react?

- A) Argue back
- B) Escape
- C) Copy
- D) Other?

The sort of things that your parents do that 'wind you up' **now** will have a tendency to do so through life. Likewise your coping strategies are likely to stay the same even when you are dealing with a different type of relationship. Do you mostly fight back, agree for the sake of the peace or run away?

Solutions

What difficulties do you think your parents have to cope with?

Are there any areas where you could make a bit more effort to please/help them or generally wind them up less?

Are there any compromises you could make?

Role play

Many families have problems in their relationships. Sometimes these are large ones, sometimes they are small things that really get on our nerves. Talk through any issues that have been mentioned as a result of this session. Get them to think about any changes they can make in their behaviour that could improve the situation. Do some role-play where they have to be the parent and a leader acts as the teenager.

Note

If you are doing a series on the Ten Commandments and covering 'Honour your father and mother', it is worth remembering that the commandment was given to adults and not just children. A different approach is to show how the implications of that commandment change over the years: for children; for young adults who have left home; for those with elderly parents.

Extras

This extract from 'A Child's Book of Prayer in Art', by Sister Wendy Becket may be helpful:

Sometimes we think that people who love one another always understand one another. No family ever loved one another more than Joseph, his wife Mary, and Jesus. Yet they did not always understand one another. Jesus had been lost for 3 days in Jerusalem and Mary and Joseph were terribly worried. When they found him, he was astonished that they had not known he would be in God's house. Mary is sad and annoyed: how could Jesus have caused them so much anxiety? But Jesus is also sad and annoyed: how could his mother, so close to God and to him not have known where to look for him? So both feel that they are in the right. In a moment they will forgive one another. They are learning a great lesson. We must always say, "I may be wrong", whenever we are certain that we are right. Here, both are "right" and both are "wrong", as often happens in misunderstandings.

Interview suggestions

Aim: to help the young people to appreciate a little of what it is like to be a parent.

Interview someone who has been a parent for a few years about what it is like being a parent and how it is different to what they imagined. It needs to be someone who is prepared to be honest about not always getting things right. A good sense of humour would also be helpful. Discuss with them beforehand the sort of questions it may be helpful to ask them. Here are some of the questions that we asked but you can adapt these.

Interviewer We are fortunate to have with us today someone who has several years of parenting experience who can perhaps shed some light on why it can sometimes be difficult to get on with your parents.

Interviewer How long have you been a parent?!

Interviewer And what were some of your first thoughts and feelings upon becoming a Mum/Dad?

Interviewer Was being a parent different to how you expected?

Interviewer Did you think that you would make a good parent?

Interviewer Have you lived up to your own expectations? What mistakes have you made?

Interviewer What do you do about that?

Interviewer Have you ever embarrassed your children?

Interviewer What are the nicest things about being a parent?

The aim here was to try to convey – in an amusing way, things such as

- Constant tiredness
- No lunch breaks or days off
- Loss of freedom
- Having someone dependent on you 24/7
- How it feels to have responsibility for someone else.

If your group starts to open up and find this session helpful, you may wish to continue with it the following week.

Writer: Brenda Lord; last updated 25 April 2016

Image: Lord family album