

Aim of lesson

To help the young people to extend the guidance learnt in lesson 18 to family life with children and to appreciate their present family responsibilities.

Bible background

Titus 1:6; 2:3-5; 1Timothy 3:4; 5:4; Colossians 3:20-21; Luke 9:47-48

Preparation required

As with the previous three lessons you will need to be sensitive to the personal circumstances of the class. Think through their individual circumstances so that you are prepared not to embarrass or appear to condemn.

We have already discussed pressures on a family and ways of building a marriage so be careful not to go over unnecessary ground again.

The lesson will be another opportunity to reinforce the Christian principles of love, care, forgiveness, and being non-judgmental of the individual, whilst upholding the distinction between right and wrong and the high standard of behaviour which is the goal of all disciples.

Suggested outline of lesson

Ask the young people to suggest difficulties that might arise between parents and children. Get them to list them in their books leaving room to write solutions to the difficulties later. They will probably identify some of the following and maybe others:

- Money
- Hobbies
- Illness
- Language
- Schoolwork
- Favouritism
- Part-time jobs
- Growing up
- Leaving home
- Step-parents
- Parent's demands
- (Dis)obedience
- Being 'treated as a child'
- Helping in the home
- Parental disagreement
- Sibling disagreement/rivalry
- Pressure to attend meetings
- Parent's (un)employment
- Young people's activities (discos etc.)
- Differing habits (e.g. tidiness)

Now ask them to suggest ways to avoid and solve these problems. Most of the remedies will be the same as discussed in the last lesson e.g. respect, listening to each other, doing things together. In fact you could get them to refer to the list you made last week to see what applies. They will, however, notice that differences occur because of the differing responsibilities parents and children have. For instance parents have a duty to teach their children about God and to become responsible citizens whereas children have a duty to obey their parents.

Many of the problems the students will have listed will be because the balance between being treated like a child and being treated like an adult is in question. It might be a good idea to ask the young people how they would cope with these difficulties if they were parents so that they begin to see things from their parents' point of view. Do you ever stop having to obey your parents? How do grandparents fit into family life?

As you discuss the list get them to write notes on how they would cope with the difficulties both as a parent and as a child.

Note that when discussing these with the class the positive and helpful aspects of some of these subjects should also be mentioned - not everything is a problem! It should also be stressed that facing and overcoming pressures can strengthen and develop family relationships.

These references may help.

Parent's demands Matthew 21:28-32 (parable of the two sons),
Colossians 3:20, Ephesians 6:1, Proverbs 22:6, 29:15

Leaving home	Luke 15:11-24 (prodigal son)
Sibling rivalry	Luke 15:25-32 (elder brother)
Being treated as a child	Luke 2:48-52 (Jesus, aged 12)
Parents too overbearing	Ephesians 6:4

Relevance to our lives

As we go through life we experience many different roles. It is good for the young people to understand this so that they can begin to understand how others feel as well as being prepared for different responsibilities.

Prayer

Our Father in heaven, you have shown us how the best father cares for his children. Help us to be more like you. Help us to be loving. Help us to be forgiving. Help us to be understanding and help us to be selfless. Amen.

Other suggestions for activities

Consider the ecclesia as a family. How can we extend our responsibilities to ecclesial fathers, aunts and uncles, other children and brothers and sisters.