



How do I honor my parents biblically, when I have a fractured or difficult relationship with them, especially if they are "non-practicing" believers?

My true parentage should determine my goals, motives and methods for all that I do.

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God -- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. John 1:12-13

How did my Father handle the fractured relationship between He and I?

He experienced the loss (Genesis 3; Isaiah 6:5; Romans 3:9-12, 3:20). He provided the solution (John 3:16-18; Romans 3:21-24; Romans 5:1-11; Ephes. 1:4-7; John 1:12-13). He extended me invitation to something better (Isaiah 55:1-3; Matthew 11:28-30; Rev. 3:20).

How do I honor my parents biblically,...

My Father wants to help. I should accept it.

In any and all circumstances, what He wants is for me to engage with Him so that He can help. I can engage with Him through His printed word, through His Spirit within me and through the Body of Christ.

As a Christian, He has adopted me (John 1:12-13; Galatians 4:1-7). He has given me an intimate, loving relationship with a Perfect Father and Brother. He has given me His Spirit (Romans 5:5, 1 Cor. 6:19). He will never leave me or forsake me. (Jeremiah 29:11-13; John 14:16; John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:7)

He has given me the bible so that I can better know and understand Him, myself and my relationships with Him and others. He has given me spiritual tools for the spiritual battle (Ephes. 6:10-12, 14-18).

He has provided me brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ in order to give me the acceptance, support, encouragement, hope, feedback and accountability I need as I go through the difficult changes in my life as I become more like Christ. (Galatians 6:1-5; James 5:13-16)

Given all that, how should I be with everyone?

Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. "
Matthew 22:37-40

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. 1 Cor. 13:4-8a

He has showed you, O man, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Luke 6:37

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. Romans 15:7

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. Matthew 7:12

See also: Exodus 20:1-17; Romans 1:24-32; Galatians 5:15-23; Ephes. 4:25-5:8; Philip. 2:1-4; 4:5-8; Col. 3:1-14; 1Tim 3:1-7; Titus 2:11-14

In addition to that, how should I be with my parents?

As a child I am to obey and honor my parents (Ephes. 6:1-2; Col. 3:30). When I become an adult, I am to "leave" my parents (Gen. 2:24). That means, at least, that I am no longer called to obey them. I have become a free moral agent, answerable to God, my adopted Father, not to my parents (Matthew 10:35-37). As an adult I am to continue to honor my parents (Exodus 20:12). To honor my parents means, at least, to not curse (Exodus 21:17) and to lovingly help them in need (Matthew 15:1-6; 1 Tim. 5:3-4). I am to

honor my father and mother (and my heavenly Father) in all I do, in all I say and think, both while they live and after their death.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" -- which is the first commandment with a promise -- Ephes. 6:1-2

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. Genesis 2:24

"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. Exodus 20:12

"Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death. Exodus 21:17

Loving, appropriate support (not just financial) in cases of real need.

Jesus replied, "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,' he is not to 'honor his father' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. Matthew 15:1-6

Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God. 1 Tim. 5:3-4

Now I am ready to visit you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions but you. After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. 2 Cor. 12:14

Stories to consider

- Moses and Jethro - Exodus 18
- Ruth and Naomi - Ruth
- Jesus, Mary and Joseph at the Temple - Luke 2:41-52
- Jesus and Mary at Cana - John 2:1-11
- Jesus and Mary (and John) - John 19:25-27

when I have a fractured or difficult relationship with them, ...

God is in control and a perfect has plan and purpose (Genesis 50:20; Romans 8:28-29). He wants me to talk to Him about it (Jeremiah 29:11-13). I need to inquire of Him, His Word, His people and myself, **"How could any good that God intends possibly come from this situation?"** I should commit to act on the answers He gives me.

*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. **If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.** Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary:*

*"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.*

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:14, 17-21

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable --if anything is excellent or praiseworthy --**think about such things.** Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me -- put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. Philip. 4:4-9*

Experience and grieve the loss.

I need to remember, re-experience and grieve the specifics: the hurts, the actual harm, the loss of dreams, the disappointments from my childhood and more recent life. I will seek to get beyond my anger to the underlying sadness and pain. In the safety and support God provides, I can appropriately share the experience with Him, my spouse and other, more objective Christian brothers and sisters.

I am commanded to accept my parents for who they were and who they are (Romans 15:7). I am invited and urged to engage with God regarding His plan and purpose for all that He allowed in my life. The ultimate form of healing for me is the acceptance of the will of God. "Thy will, not mine..."

Forgive

I need to forgive my parents for not being perfect, for not being the parents I would have liked them to be, for all the harm they may have caused (Ephes. 4:24; Col. 3:12-14). Just like me, my parents did and are still doing the best they can with the gifts and skills they currently have. I can pray for them. I can consider who is in bondage to my unforgiveness. I can dwell on what God did to restore my relationship with Him. As necessary, I can pray for the willingness to forgive.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever

grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Col. 3:12-14

See The Peacemaker brochure.

I must deal directly with the person with whom you have the conflict (Matthew 5:23-24, 18:15). It is God's plan for me to seek godly support as necessary but do not seek allies.

Get the log out.

I can ask God for godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10). Godly sorrow may be defined as a humble acceptance of personal responsibility for my wrongful motives and behaviors and a compassionate and empathetic recognition of all the harmful and hurtful consequences that resulted.

I can examine myself. Whom have I hurt? What damage, disappointment, harm, hurt, pain have I caused? How can I make it right? I should dwell on how I have hurt others, not on how bad I think I am or how bad I feel.

What are my desires and perceived needs? What are the legitimate needs? How might my need or desire be rightly directed and expressed? What should it or could it be? What keeps me from doing the right thing? What help do I need from God and others? What keeps me from seeking the help I need? How might it be redeemed?

What next? How can this all be applied to change my relationship today with God, myself (my relational history, self-talk, etc) and my parents? To whom would He have me confess? Apologize? What would He have me amend? What would He have me do in the future?

Go and show your brother his fault

Having done the preparation, I can now lovingly go and show my brother (father, mother) his fault. I can express my appreciation for the person and the relationship. I can confess my contribution to the problem; identify specific observations and facts; seek additional relevant data; seek to understand the other's perspective. I can be tentative in offering my interpretations. I can be non-demanding as we seek mutual understanding and a resolution that meets both our interests.

"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. Matthew 18:15

But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

"I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Matthew 18:16-18

Invitation to reconciliation

Having done all of the preparation, I am now in a position to lovingly invite the establishment of a redefined, more appropriate relationship. Consistent with the biblical principles listed above, I can evaluate any relationship with principles such as the the following “Ten Laws of Boundaries” adapted from Boundaries by Cloud & Townsend.

1. The law of sowing and reaping (reality).
2. The law of responsibility (to not for).
3. The law of power (and powerlessness).
4. The law of respect (of other’s boundaries and freedom).
5. The law of motivation (duty, fear or love).
6. The law of evaluation (between hurt and harm).
7. The law of proactivity (respond, not react).
8. The law of envy (take ownership of the problem).
9. The law of activity (knock, seek, ask).
10. The law of exposure (honest, in the light, knowing and be known).

Cloud and Townsend would recommend the following series of steps in establishing appropriate boundaries in families: identify the symptom; identify and understand the conflict; identify my legitimate need that drives the conflict; get my legitimate needs met appropriately; practice boundary skills with safe and supportive people; get help in limiting inappropriate situations and relationships; forgive; respond, don’t react; love (act) in responsible freedom, not in duty, fear, guilt or shame.

Redemption

I will look for ways that God has, is or could use my painful experiences and healing in my own growth (Romans 5:3-4; Romans 8:28-29; James 1:2-4); in how I relate to my children; and in offering comfort and testimony to others (1 Peter 2:15, 19, 21; 2 Cor. 1:3-5).

Stories to consider

- Jesus and Mary (and brother) - Matthew 12:48
- Prodigal Son and Father - Luke 15:11-32

especially if they are “non-practicing” believers?

A story to consider

- Jonathan and Saul (and David) - 1 Samuel 18:1-20:42; 1 Samuel 23:15-18; 1 Samuel 31:1-6

What is the one thing God most wants me to change? What would please and honor Him most?

Some key points from Jack’s perspective:

- Utilize all the help that we need and that God provides. Loving and supportive relationships with God and others are fundamental to our growth and healing, and therefore to our future relationship with anyone. Build on these.
- As adults, we cannot freely offer our love if we do not have the capacity to freely chose to offer it or not. Love cannot be demanded or required by another. It is a gift.
- We are only responsible “as far as we are able.” We can grieve and forgive. We can repent, change, make restitution and seek forgiveness as necessary. We can offer appropriate re-engagement. Beyond that, we are not able or responsible. But love always hopes (and prays) and perseverse.
- We can redeem our loss by our future relationship with God, our parents and others.

References:

The Bible

How People Grow (Cloud & Townsend)

The Peacemaker (Ken Sande)

Boundaries (Cloud & Townsend)