

# Lesson 3

Today is Father's Day. Some students may not have a father who is present in their lives. Adapt the lesson as needed to fit to various family situations in your class.

## Unit 22 Theme:

Rules to Live By

# Godly Relationships

## STEP 1 Life Need (5–10 minutes)

- Read and discuss a feature in *The Rock*.
- Read about the fifth and sixth commandments.
  - ☐ *The Rock*
  - ☐ “The Big Ten” booklet from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*

## STEP 2 Bible Learning (15–20 minutes)

- Complete a Bible study.
  - ☐ Bible
  - ☐ *The Rock*

## STEP 3 Bible Application (5–10 minutes)

- Discuss problems with parents.
  - ☐ Whiteboard or poster board and markers

## STEP 4 Life Response (about 5 minutes)

- Students commit themselves to pray about and improve troubled relationships.
- Students agree to report to a prayer partner.

## Memory Verse

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise.

—Ephesians 6:1-2

## Bible Basis:

The commandments regarding parents and violence (Exod. 20:12-13); Jesus teaches about parents (Mark 7:9-13) and violence (Matt. 5:21-22).

## Bible Truth:

Attitudes toward others, especially toward parents, are as important as our actions toward them.

## Lesson Aim:

That your students discover how attitudes affect their actions, especially toward those close to them.

## Understanding the Bible

In ancient Israel there were two basic kinds of laws—apodictic (app-uh-DICK-tick) and casuistic (kazh-uh-WISS-tick). The apodictic type was basically the “thou shalt” and “thou shalt not” kind of absolute commandments. Casuistic laws were case laws that could be based upon judicial precedent (that is, from this past court case we can say, “If such and such happens, then such and such will be the penalty”).

At first glance it would seem that Jesus is adding to the burden of the Law by His words in Matthew 5:21-22. But what He is actually doing is pointing out the shallowness of the interpretation favored by the scribes and Pharisees of His day. They restricted their judgments to the external act of murder and failed to deal with the spiritual cause of the crime.

Therefore, the emphasis isn’t on the insults Jesus mentions (*raca* [RAH-kuh]—“empty-headed” or “idiot”) but on the heart attitude such language reveals. Hendriksen comments, “He is saying that sinful anger—the kind that leads to bitter words—is in its very nature murder. It is murder committed in the heart” (*The Gospel of Matthew*). Hatred contains the seeds of murder.

Jesus is getting at the deep causes of murder—spiritual

—continued on next page

☐ indicates items you will need to prepare before class

## Understanding the Bible —cont'd

causes. Uncontrolled anger and bitter hatred lead to murder. They are the causes; murder is the effect. Therefore, to genuinely pray for and work for an enemy's good reflects a deep love that comes from being loved by God.

### Tips

#### classroom

Some situations you read in the Bible Application step may hit your students close to home. Be sensitive! The following suggestions could help if you notice a student becoming overly emotional or withdrawn.

1. Before class read each situation carefully. Based on what you already know about your students, try to remember if any of them have mentioned having a similar problem and then make a selection. You probably have time to use all of the examples, but leave one out if you feel it is best.
2. Consider calling parents in advance, tell them about the lesson, briefly describe the situations, and ask which examples deal with issues their families deal with.
3. If you notice a strong reaction in any students try to get in touch with them before they leave class. Consider contacting their parents or, depending on the issue, you might suggest pastoral or Christian counseling. You might also give the student a prayer hotline or local crisis hotline number. If they seem reluctant to talk, do not press them. If you are not qualified in a certain area try to find someone who is before doing anything drastic.

## Understanding Your Students

It is easy to write off certain kinds of conduct as teenage rebellion. That certainly accounts for its share of the dilemma we face in our communities. But at the same time we can't ignore that there are physical, emotional, and social dynamics at work daily in the lives of youth.

There are moments when nothing would be more appealing than to climb onto a parent's lap for awhile to snuggle. At other times, nowhere in the universe is far enough away from an authority figure. Many students would be at a loss themselves to explain why on any given day when departing home they might say, "Why do

you expect so much from me? I'm only 13!" And the same evening a parent can get hit with "Stop treating me like a baby! I'm 13!"

Still, the parental role is as important to adolescence as to any other stage of growth. The love/hate relationship is not so much between youth and their parents as between youth and their own growth—a growth that takes place in and through conflict. Parents can mediate that conflict in a way that no one else can. And young people, in their most honest moments, want that help.



### PRESESSION ACTIVITY



#### Honor and Respect

• **Objective:** To help your students think about honoring and respecting each other.

Pair off students. Give each pair a pencil and paper. Have them write the words "HONOR" and "RESPECT" down the left side of the paper.

Ask students to think of a word or short phrase in which they can show honor and respect to each other. Each student will fill in one word for and about his or her partner. Write this example on the board:

Help with homework.

Open the door for you.

Nurture others to grow in faith.

Only encourage you.

Refuse to argue.

Regather the class and let students read their lists aloud.

# STEP 1

Life Need  
5–10 minutes

## Lesson Aim:

That your students discover how attitudes affect their actions, especially toward those close to them.

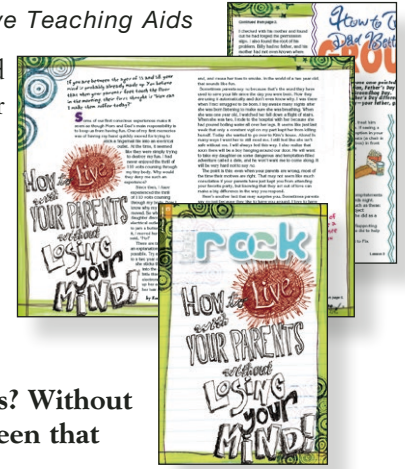
**Objective:** That your students learn to appreciate their relationships with their parent(s).

### Materials:

- ☐ *The Rock*
- ☐ “The Big Ten” booklet from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*

Have your students read the feature in *The Rock* titled “How to Live with Your Parents without Losing Your Mind!” then discuss these questions:

- ▶ Can you remember a time when you realized your parents were right for saying no to you, even though you didn’t want to admit it? What happened? *Let a few volunteers give examples.*
- ▶ Do you know anyone in a situation like Billy’s? Without naming names, describe the relationship between that person and his or her parents.
- ▶ After reading Billy’s story, what do you appreciate about your parent or parents? *You might have a student who has a strained relationship or no relationship at all with his or her parents. Before class begins, ask God to help you recognize such a student. If you notice that someone is not participating in this discussion, don’t force it. Instead, try reaching out to this student outside of class.*



God knows how important parent/child relationships are. Parents can hurt their children, and vice versa. This is why God has so much to say about family relationships in Scripture. In fact, the fifth commandment focuses on your relationship with your parents.



Distribute copies of “The Big Ten” booklet on the Ten Commandments. Reread the introduction if you think your students need a review. Also, have someone read the fifth commandment aloud. Collect the pamphlet at the end of class for use in Lessons 4 and 5.



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# STEP 2

## Bible Learning

15–20 minutes

### Bible Basis:

The commandments regarding parents and violence (Exod. 20:12–13); Jesus teaches about parents (Mark 7:9–13) and violence (Matt. 5:21–22).

**Objective:** That your students learn how the principle of love is central to any good relationship.

#### Materials:

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ *The Rock*

Ask students to turn to “Getting Along God’s Way,” the Bible study in *The Rock*. The entire study, along with possible answers to questions, is reprinted below.

### ■ From *THE ROCK*—Getting Along God’s Way

#### The Starting Point

Love is the number one ingredient in any strong relationship. Take our relationship with God. It all started with God’s love for us. And because of His love for us, we can love Him back.

But love doesn’t stop there. The more we realize how loved we are, the more loving we become. God’s love frees us to love others.



- ▶ Pick one group from the list below. What would that group be like if the people in it really loved each other?

- a. family** (Fewer arguments; more understanding between parents and more between parents and children; more trust; better communication; deal with each other rather than sweeping things under the carpet and ignoring them.)
- b. church** (More unity; less gossip; people helping one another instead of talking about each other; less complaining; more honesty.)
- c. close friends** (Fewer fights; more understanding and trust.)
- d. school class** (More students helping each other; fewer hassles with teachers.)
- e. sports team** (Better teamwork; fewer people hogging the spotlight.)

Love is the foundation of any good relationship. That’s what today’s lesson is all about. And even though we won’t study all the relationships we’ve just mentioned, we’ll be learning some basic facts that apply to all relationships. We’ll start by looking at the relationship we know best.

#### Our First Friends

The family is the first group we belong to. That’s where we learn to relate to others. No wonder God thinks the family is important!

- ▶ Read God’s command in Exodus 20:12. What does it mean to honor our parents? How does honor show love? (*Help students see that “honor” means more than “obey.”*)

A person can obey and absolutely hate doing it! Honor isn’t primarily an action; it’s an attitude. It involves respect for the other person, an awareness of that person’s value, and a desire to treat that person properly. Honor is built on love. As we learned in the first lesson, honor grows out of love. If we love God, we should honor His name.

## TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Exodus 20:12-13

<sup>12</sup>"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

<sup>13</sup>"You shall not murder."

Mark 7:9-13

<sup>9</sup>And he continued, "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!" <sup>10</sup>For Moses said, 'Honor your father and mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.' <sup>11</sup>But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is Corban (that is, devoted to God)—<sup>12</sup>then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother. <sup>13</sup>Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that."

Matthew 5:21-22

<sup>21</sup>"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' <sup>22</sup>But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell."

- ▶ Read Mark 7:9-13. What did Jesus point out that the Pharisees were doing? What should they have been doing? (*They were setting aside God's commands so they could follow the traditions they thought were more important. They should have placed more importance on God's commands than on their own ideas.*)

These Pharisees set aside God's command for grown children to take care of their elderly or needy parents by allowing the children to dedicate their money to God. Once the children dedicated the money, it didn't have to be used for religious purposes or for their parents.

- ▶ How is our love for our parents like our love for God? How is it different? (*Help students see that they were loved by their parents before they were old enough to love their parents in return. And they were also loved by God before they were able to return His love. The difference is that parental love isn't eternal, and it certainly isn't perfect like God's love. Human love can make mistakes, and it can change.*)

## And All Others

The love God gives us isn't limited to family and close friends. His love frees us to love other people as well—even the people who don't like us and give us a bad time.

This doesn't mean we "fall in love" with everyone we meet, but we are able to show them love (respect and concern)—the way God showed His love for us.

- ▶ But what about people we can't stand—people who don't like us and give us a bad time? How can we possibly love them?

- ▶ Read Exodus 20:13; Matthew 5:21-22, 44. Then tell what NOT to do and what TO do about people we don't get along with. (*Don't kill. Don't lose your temper and call people names. Instead, do good to them and pray for them.*)

Explain that *raca* means "empty-head." However, don't let students turn this passage into a rule they must follow legalistically. It's talking about put-downs by name calling. Point out that Jesus is getting at the deep causes of murder—emotional causes. Uncontrolled anger and bitter hatred lead to murder. They are the causes; murder is the effect. Therefore, to genuinely pray for and work for an enemy's good reflects a deep love—a love that comes from being loved by God.

Have someone read the last two paragraphs of the Bible study aloud while your students follow along.

To sum up, God's way of building good relationships is to love first—without waiting for other people to be friendly to us. Then other people can respond to our love. That's just what God did. "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

This doesn't mean that everyone will love us. After all, God loves a lot of people who don't love Him back! But there will be some successes—strong, growing, loving relationships like God meant for us to have.



# STEP 3

## Bible Application

(5–10 minutes)

**Objective:** That your students apply scriptural principles to their problems with parents.

**Materials:**






☐ Whiteboard or poster board and markers

Today we've focused on God's commandment concerning our relationship with our parents. Let's listen to some descriptions of problems some youth have with their parents and figure out a good way to deal with these problems.

You can break up into small groups or stay together. If you decide to have small groups, write the discussion questions on the board so groups can come up with ideas to present to the class.

1. My parents are divorced. I really hate that I have to choose who to spend holidays and vacations with. The only good thing about this situation is that they both feel a little guilty and buy me lots of stuff to make up for it. It's even better that they don't talk to each other so much. They say they love me but it is hard to relate to them sometimes. I feel like they will do anything I want them to except really talk to me.
2. I live with my grandparents. They have raised me since I was a baby. I didn't see my mom very often when I was younger and I barely know my dad. Lately, my mom has been coming around more and wants to be a part of my life. I feel pretty mad at her for not paying more attention to her life before I was born. I don't know if I want her to be a part of my life now.
3. Kids at school say I am lucky because I still live with both of my real parents. I don't feel so lucky though. My dad drinks a lot and when he does he sometimes yells at me and my mom. I don't know what to do. I don't like it when my dad yells and then punishes me for sticking up for my mom. But, I know he works hard to support us and needs to relax.

Discussion questions:

-  What problem does this person have with his or her parents?
-  What does this problem have to do with today's lesson?
-  How do you think this problem should be handled?
-  How do you think God might want this problem to be handled?
-  Have you or a friend encountered this problem before? What did you or your friend do about it?

NOTE: See Classroom Tips for suggestions concerning this part of the lesson.

## STEP 4

Life Response  
(5–10 minutes)

### Bible Truth:

Attitudes toward others, especially toward parents, are as important as our actions toward them.

### TIP

Next week there is an optional activity that requires showing some commercials. You might want to look ahead now to see if you would like to use this option so that you can prepare appropriately.

**Objective: That your students ask for God’s help in relating to other people in their lives.**

Now ask students to take a moment to think of one person whom they are having trouble relating to. Perhaps some bad attitudes have developed toward that person. Perhaps some harmful patterns of behavior have been established.

After reminding students once again that God created them to relate to others, ask them to pray silently for God’s help in starting to turn that problem relationship around.

If your students really want to work on a problem relationship and become accountable about it to someone in class, pair them up with a partner. Have the partners discuss the relationships they want to work on, then pray together. Next week they can get together and report on their progress. They can continue to report on their progress for as many weeks as they want.

Close the class in prayer, asking God to guide and strengthen your students and to give them patience to keep working at their relationships.