

Family Feuds

How to Respond

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Do you dread family get-togethers and vacations? Do you often regret the way you talk and act around your family? Do you avoid your family? Maybe some of these words sound familiar to you:

“I’m a grown woman, but I act like a child around my family and bicker with everyone.”

“I know it shouldn’t bother me, but my parents always favor my brother over me.”

“My parents still tell me what to do, even though I’m 40 years old!”

“My sister isn’t speaking to me, but she’s sure talking about me.”

“My childhood was so hurtful that I can’t imagine having a relationship with my parents now.”

“My family is out of control. Their behavior is so destructive that I don’t want my children to be around them.”

If you have a hard time relating to your family, you have plenty of company. Many people have a difficult time dealing with the family they grew up in. Why is it so hard to get along with your family? Deep hurts from your childhood, unrealistic expectations,

and old patterns resurfacing are just some of the reasons you might find yourself feuding with your family. Is it possible to love in the midst of these challenges? Yes, with God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26). Change begins with taking an honest look at your family and yourself, hearing what God has to say about your struggles, and then trusting Jesus to help you love in a difficult situation.

Every Family Is Flawed

What were your parents like as you grew up? Warm? Gentle? Encouraging? Distant? Passive? Abusive? What kind of family did you grow up in? Safe? Secure? Nurturing? Violent? Broken? Evil? There are as many different kinds of families as there are different people.

But one thing is true of every family: Each one is flawed. None of us grew up with perfect parents or perfect siblings, and none of us were perfect children. Your parents and siblings sinned against you, and you sinned against them. This truth is not meant to excuse or minimize the evil and abuse that

happens in some families; instead, it's a reminder that we all need God to be at work in our family relationships. He is the only one who can redeem family relationships broken by sin, and give you the grace to respond to your parents and siblings with wisdom and love.

Flawed Families Need God's Grace

Read almost any Bible story and you will realize that God is very familiar with flawed family dynamics. King David, one of the greatest heroes in the Bible, was also the father of a dysfunctional family. His son, Absalom, conspired to murder him and take over as king, and David had to fight for his life against his own son. Despite his son's treachery, David wanted to protect Absalom; and when he was killed, David suffered deeply.

But human sin is no match for God's grace, and God still used David and his family in his kingdom. The psalms David wrote as he suffered have been used by God to bring comfort to his people for centuries. And from David's family came Jesus Christ,