

Are You Mad at Mom?

Reconciling a mother-daughter relationship requires both parties' input.

Not long ago I was on the radio discussing the subject of my new book, *A Daughter's Journey Home: Finding a Way to Love, Honor and Connect With Your Mother*, which encourages adult daughters to do what they can to be reconciled to their moms. I was amazed at how many women preferred to write their mothers out of their lives! Annoyed, irritated and hurt, they believed cutting off the relationship altogether was the best answer.

Though I understand the pain this significant relationship can cause, I know severing it isn't the best solution. It certainly isn't God's solution. Jesus said, "'This is how I want you to conduct yourself in these matters. If you enter your place of worship and, about to make an offering, you suddenly remember a grudge a friend has against you, abandon your offering, leave immediately, go to this friend and make things right. Then and only then, come back and work things out with God'" (Matt. 5:23-24, *The Message*). And Paul said, "All this comes from the God who settled the relationship between us and him, and then called us to settle our relationships with each other" (2 Cor. 5:18).

The Bible tells us we are to be ministers of reconciliation, yet when it comes to making things right with family members many of us would rather give excuses. But I don't see any disclaimers in the Scriptures.

You may be reluctant to take the first step because you think the other person doesn't deserve it. God didn't reconcile

Himself to us through His Son because we deserved it! Reconciliation has nothing to do with deserving anything. It is a gift offered to those who will accept it.

Reconciling a mother-daughter relationship requires both parties' cooperation; however, it takes only one to begin the process. The journey can be difficult, requiring much prayer and Christ-like behavior. So, here's what I encourage every adult daughter to do:

Make the first move. Worry less about what she does and more about what you are willing to do. Ask God to soften your heart and give you more of His love, power and wisdom.

Learn to be empathetic. Understanding can go a long way toward making changes that will, at first, seem awkward. Considering each others' positions will help you both adapt to a new dynamic.

Listen. If you want to develop empathy for your mother, listen to what she says about her life. After you listen, repeat back what you heard and ask her if your account was correct. If it is, you are on your way to a more productive relationship.

Consider her worth. In problematic mother-daughter relationships, it sometimes helps daughters to think about what their mothers might have been like if they had been given unconditional love and acceptance throughout their lives. This may help create empathy even when mothers have problems. Understanding the origin of these problems may help daughters discover their mothers' worth.

Be concrete. Talk to your mother in specific, rather than

general, terms. Instead of simply telling her you love her, say: “Mom, I love it when you call and check on me, I appreciate your spending time with the children,” or something similar. This works when expressing anger and hurt as well. Instead of telling her she’s difficult, say, “I feel bad when you accuse me of being irresponsible” (or whatever applies).

Widen your lens even further. As you develop greater empathy for your mom, your picture of her will expand. Take time to think about her world, the generation in which she was raised, her sibling position in her family, her ethnicity, social class, religion and even in what part of the country she was raised. These things will help you better understand her.

If you are God’s daughter, you have benefited from His unconditional love and acceptance. It’s time to pour that out to others by becoming a minister of reconciliation. Though this ministry is desperately needed in the church, I believe it must begin at home. When we get real with those closest to us, we can’t help but have an impact on our churches.

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