



GUIDELINES DAILY COMMENTARY ON LIVING WITH DR. HAROLD J. SALA

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HOW DO YOU HELP AN ADULT CHILD?

Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments. Deuteronomy 7:9

How does a parent help an adult child? When your little boy or girl was small and fell down and hurt himself, you as the parent picked up your child and fussed over him smothering the scratched knee with kisses and love. Your loving care climaxed with the application of a bandaid put on with all the tenderness of a mother's love. But what do you do when you have an adult son or daughter whose heart is breaking, and you desperately wish you could give him or her the same comfort you did when your child was four years old?

I thought of that very question recently when a mother described the problem which her 30-year-old son was going through--a physical problem which involved a debilitating illness. She wrote, "I can't stop being a mother or stop my heart from wanting to 'fix' his hurt and make the pain go away--not so much the physical but the mental and emotional."

Dads face the same pain at times. One of the most emotion-filled scenes in the Bible is that of David who wept over the death of his wayward son, Absalom. Remember how David poured out his heart? In anguish he cried out, "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you--O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Samuel 18:33).

There are some things that a concerned parent can do:

Guideline #1: You can pray. Before you discount this, don't underestimate the power of prayer asking God to do what only He can do. Most of the time, we want to jump in and fix things. That's our nature, and as parents that's what we've done for most of our children's years. If they had trouble at school, we went to the teacher. If they were hurting, we did what we could to relieve the source of frustration or pain. But there are some things which only God can do. Don't forget He can do them. Take your Bible and fall back on the great promises of answered prayer as in Mark 11:24 where Jesus said, "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." Remind the Lord how He has met you in the past, and trust Him for what you cannot fix.

Guideline #2: Make yourself available without trying to fix the problem. This may be tough. After all, we as parents know better than our offspring what they ought to do--at least, we think so. But as we raised them, we gave them tools. Trust that you did a good job, and give them some time to ask for help. When Job's friends came to see him, they sat with him for a week without saying anything. Usually, within an hour, we parents have told our hurting adult children what to do and how to go about it. Save your breath. When they ask for advice, give it to them. If they don't ask for it, you're wasting your time to offer it. Painful as it may be, trust that the tools you gave as your son or daughter grew up, will work now.

Guideline #3: Listen without being judgmental. This is hard, very hard. But very important. There will come a time when you are asked for advice. Share from your experience and what God has taught you. Ask questions which may only certify what is obvious to you but not to your adult son or daughter.

Guideline #4: Provide resource materials or help. Sometimes saying, "Look, I don't know what the answer is, but Uncle George has been through this. What do you think about talking to him?" may put your son on the path to help.

Guideline #5: Hold fast to the goodness of God. Some of the most valuable lessons in life are learned through pain and difficulty. A loving God allows His children to face the fire to refine the gold. Don't forget it.

Resource reading: Isaiah 45:4-12