

[Reuben's Dilemma](#) [1]

by: [Curvin Wenger](#) [2]

“Oh, bother”, said Reuben to himself, “why am I not allowed to be like the rest of the youth?” It was a Monday morning and he had just finished telling his dad that at the youth gathering the previous night it had been announced that the following Friday evening their youth group would all be going to the local county fair for the annual tractor pull. Although the youth did not normally go to the fair, for some reason it had become a tradition over the years to go to the tractor pull each year. They seemed to think it was a time of innocent enjoyment which could be attended by the group as a whole.

As Reuben and his father had discussed the upcoming event, there had been a fair bit of back and forth dialogue between them. It had become more and more clear that they were on opposite ends of the issue—almost as if they were going in two different directions. “Are you sure that William’s dad is going to let him go?” Reuben’s dad had finally asked. “I find that hard to believe. But even if he and all the rest are planning to go, I still won’t allow you to go, and that is that. We can’t keep arguing about this; I do not want you to go.”

“This is just so unfair”, Reuben muttered to himself. “I am old enough to drive, so why can’t I make my own decisions?” Many thoughts seemed to tumble about in confusion as Reuben continued to think about all the many details over and over, trying in vain to find a way out of his conflicting options. In the midst of this mental anguish, God’s still, small voice tried to remind him that he really should honor and obey his father. “But it just isn’t fair” was the thought in reply, which came back with a vengeance, trying to drown out God’s voice.

And so that week went by with hardly a waking hour passing that Reuben did not replay the many conflicting thoughts over and over in his mind. “If only my dad wasn’t so difficult.” “If only I was part of another family.” “It just isn’t fair.” “All the rest will be going, what will they think of me?” “They will probably think that I’m some holier-than-thou, do-gooder...” But God’s still, small voice kept quietly persisting day after day, hour after hour, reminding him that the Scriptures clearly teach that children must honor and obey their father and mother. Even though it did not make sense and even though everyone else would be allowed, there just was no exception to this simple command of God.

Friday night came and went with Reuben going about his daily routine, all the while feeling frustrated, discouraged and confused. He really did want to follow the clear teachings of Scripture and he knew that God expected him to yield to the direction of his father, but oh, the struggle!

As time passed on into the next number of weeks, there really did not seem to be any negative outcomes resulting from the stand that he had taken, albeit a grudging one. To his surprise, nobody seemed to resent the fact that he had not gone along and no one appeared to treat him any differently than before. With the passing of time, gradually this dilemma became less and less of a current issue for Reuben.

This was actually just another challenging issue in his life, which had seemed to become somewhat of a lifestyle pattern. You see, over the years, for one reason or another, somehow

the idea of being submitted to authority had seemed to pass Reuben by. He was developing into what we would consider a rebellious teenager. Time and again throughout his teenage life, there were issues that would seem to appear out of nowhere, about which Reuben and his father just did not see eye-to-eye on. These situations were never really resolved, but rather seemed to just pile up inside of Reuben, causing more and more frustration and confusion.

As the months turned into years and the years slowly passed by, Reuben had many more challenging situations to face as God continued to take him through the school of life. For some reason it seemed that Reuben was what some would refer to as a slow learner in this spiritual school of life. Some might even go so far as to say he was hard-headed, which would also probably be true, although the Bible would have labeled his condition as “stiff-necked” or “hard-hearted.” It seemed that he went through the same type of test in life, over and over again. He appeared to be blinded to his own part in each situation. All he could see was the fact that his father seemed to be opposed to a number of things that he (Reuben) wanted to do.

Years later, after he matured into adulthood and had a family of his own, God finally was able to start getting through to him on some of these matters. As he looked back over his life in an effort to figure out why things seemed to always be conspiring against him, Reuben realized that all along he had allowed a rebellious attitude to reside in his heart. Without realizing it, this heart issue had developed into a root of bitterness which he carried with him wherever he went and it was through these lenses that he tended to see all of life. This caused him to be blinded to his own fleshly desires which were being fed and controlled by the “old man.” Even though part of him wanted to serve God, it was not until he took full responsibility for his actions and behaviors that he started to realize that peace and joy come from a complete surrender to the Lord.

Another key point that also started to make sense was the issue of peer pressure and how that affects who it is that has the heart of an individual. For some reason, throughout his growing up years, Reuben had never fully given his heart to his father. This in turn made it very easy to give his heart to his peers, which in turn caused the influences of his friends to hold great sway over his desires. This is, by the way, what is referred to as peer pressure.

Thus the peer pressure of his friends caused Reuben to struggle tremendously when they were all going to go to the tractor pull that one Friday night. Since he had given his heart to his peers, they were the ones who were able to control his desires. Through this we can easily see why there was so much frustration and confusion. We can also understand why Reuben and his father had so many problems getting along and communicating—Reuben had given his heart to the wrong source (his friends instead of his parents).

This issue, regarding who has the heart, is a foundational issue in the lives of youth today. Whomever they give their heart to, will usually control their desires. Whoever controls the desires of their heart will ultimately control their life and, in the end, their destiny. God talks about this in His Word, where Jesus says in Matthew 6:21 that “where your treasure is there will your heart be also,” and then in Matthew 12:35 he says that whatever fruit we bring forth spiritually is directly controlled by the kind of heart we have. Finally, in Proverbs 4:23, we are told, “keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”

In conclusion, young people, “remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth” Ecclesiastes 12:1. No matter what your age, if you are able to read and understand this article, then you

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are old enough to start giving your whole heart to your parents “as unto the Lord,” since it is God who has commanded that you should honor and obey your parents.

If you do not give yourself completely to your parents, as being your God-given authority, then you will not be able to obey them from your heart, and you will not be able to honor them. Also, when you come to the age of accountability and God’s Spirit starts speaking to you about giving your heart to the Lord and being born again, it will be much more difficult and challenging to yield your will and give Him your whole heart. This will, in turn, cause many years of undue spiritual struggle, difficulty in walking in spiritual victory, and much confusion regarding your assurance of Salvation.

But, if you practice giving your heart to your parents throughout your childhood and into your teenage years, then when God’s still, small voice starts speaking to you in your age of accountability, you will be prepared to more easily yield your heart to the Lord. If this yielded lifestyle is normal for you, then you will not have near the struggle and heartache as you go through your teen years and into adulthood.

As a Christian, after your conversion from the *old man* to the *new man*, it will be much easier to walk in victory, to have peace and joy in your heart, and to have the issue settled in your spirit that “you **have** eternal life”.

May God take away the “scales” from our eyes so we may see this concept clearly.

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