What advice would you give to the following people? What can they do to survive better in their families? Specifically, how could today’s Scriptures affect their situations?

1. I can’t stand it anymore. I have a sister three years older, who is like the Princess of the Universe. She got straight A-plusses in school and joined every team and club there was. She’s pretty, talented, and kind to animals. My parents can’t stop talking about her. I can deal with every teacher at school saying, “Why can’t you be more like your sister?” But when I get the same thing at home, I go a little crazy, okay?

2. I did something stupid. I snuck out at night to go to a party. My folks had said no, but I really had to go, so I did the whole thing putting the pillows in the bed and climbing out the window. It was like Prison Break. Except I got busted sneaking back in at 3:30 while Mom was raiding the fridge. I apologized for three days straight, I was grounded for three months, and I deserved it. But that was last year, and my parents still don’t trust me. If I say I’m just going to the mall with friends, they think I’m lying. I don’t know how to win back their trust.

3. We learned two years ago that Mom has cancer. She’s been great; she did the treatments and it looks like she might be winning this battle. But it is a battle, for all of us. We’ve all learned to pay attention to Mom’s needs, to be quiet in the afternoon because she needs to sleep, to do extra chores around the house because she can’t. And I don’t mind that, because I love her. Well, I do mind it, a little. Hey, I’m a teenager. This is my time to have fun. And I just feel it’s slipping away, because our whole lives are focused on Mom and this stupid disease. I can’t believe I’m saying this.
4. Forgive me if I’m a bit spacey today. Didn’t get much sleep. Mom and Dad were up half the night arguing again. They’re good at that. She picks at him, one little thing after another, and then he drops a bombshell, like she’s not interesting to him anymore and he might leave, so then she pretends like she doesn’t care, so he has to keep threatening things, like he’ll take the car and the house and she’ll be a bag lady. They’ve been arguing like this since I was nine, so I don’t think they’re going to split up, but it’s been getting worse lately. I just wish I could get some sleep.

5. No, I can’t go out with the group tonight because the Storm Troopers say no. Did I say Storm Troopers? I meant my parents. Mr. and Mrs. Darth Vade. I don’t mean to say they’re too strict, but my friends have started to ask when I’m up for parole. I have to be home by 8 every night. I still have a bedtime, for goodness’ sake. I can’t have a computer in my room, or a cell phone of my own. I get to watch no more than ten hours of TV a week. They keep a chart on that. And Mom checks every CD I buy. I see my friends staying out late, texting each other, and just generally having fun. And I wonder when I’ll get out of this prison camp I call home.

6. My home is a zoo. I am the oldest of five siblings. Well, half-siblings. My mom had me at a young age and never married my real dad. Then she married my stepdad and had four more kids with him. It’s one big happy family, but sometimes I feel that I don’t belong. Both my mom and my stepdad seem to love the little ones more than me. I can’t blame them. I mean, they had those kids together, while I’m just a product of a relationship that shouldn’t have been. Still, it would be nice to feel that I really belonged.
For Parents [Parents should . . . ]

1. _______________________________________________________________________________________________

2. _______________________________________________________________________________________________

3. _______________________________________________________________________________________________

4. _______________________________________________________________________________________________

5. _______________________________________________________________________________________________

For Teenagers [Teens should . . . ]

6. _______________________________________________________________________________________________

7. _______________________________________________________________________________________________

8. _______________________________________________________________________________________________

9. _______________________________________________________________________________________________

10. _______________________________________________________________________________________________
1. My mom is always telling me to be more considerate, to do things for others, and so I did. We had this pretzel sale after school for the band trip. And I was putting things away with my friend Ramona and, well, she missed the late bus. This was a problem because her dad has their only car and he works late. So anyway, since I drove to school that day, I decided to drive her home. So my mom calls my cell, wondering where I am. I tell her what I'm doing, and she's all, *That’s such a bad neighborhood, I can’t believe you’re doing that, what if anything happens to the car?* Long story short, I can’t use the car anymore, which is so unfair. I did a good deed, and I would do it again. My mom just doesn’t get it.

2. I love my folks, but they drive me crazy. Lately, it's like every little thing they say sounds like an insult. They tell me stuff I already know, like I'm stupid. Or they treat me like a baby. Or nag me about doing some chore when I was just about to do it. It makes me madder and madder. I mean, stark raving mad, yes, but also mad at them. And I’m starting to show it. Sometimes by yelling, but usually by complaining, by being sarcastic, by doing things really slow, by copping an attitude. I see myself doing this stuff, and I don’t like it. I don’t want to be like that at all. It doesn’t feel good to be so bitter, but I am, and they kind of forced me into it.
3. What they don’t know won’t hurt them, right? My parents have this image of me being the good Christian kid. And I am. Mostly. But one night I was staying over my best friend’s house when we decided to crash this big party that some kids at school were having. There were some older kids there too, so there was some beer and some weed. And my friend got me to try it. I know I should have felt guilty, but it was all very exciting. I was like a different person. I don’t mind being the Christian kid, but I need a, you know, vacation every so often. So I keep doing stuff like that—sneaking out, telling my folks one thing when I’m really doing another. It’s like I’m a secret agent. My parents have no clue.

4. It is so awesome when you feel God leading you. And I am totally convinced that God wants me to be a musical missionary. You see, I play guitar and write songs, and my voice is pretty good. And I hear these songs on Christian radio and I know I could do even better. So I put together this band and we’ve been working really hard and I just have this peace that this is what I’m supposed to do. Unfortunately, my parents don’t see it that way. They are bothered by the fact that I’m failing geometry—like I’m really going to need that when I’m singing for Jesus. They’re insisting that I go to college, when I think that money would be better spent in a studio recording a CD. I have no doubt that God is guiding me; I just wish he’d guide my parents a little too.
This is a story Jesus told. After reading it with your group, rewrite it with different characters, but the same basic story line. Try to include at least one parent and a teenager.

The kingdom of God is like a king who decided to square accounts with his servants. As he got under way, one servant was brought before him who had run up a debt of a hundred thousand dollars. He couldn’t pay up, so the king ordered the man, along with his wife, children, and goods, to be auctioned off at the slave market.

The poor wretch threw himself at the king’s feet and begged, “Give me a chance and I’ll pay it all back.” Touched by his plea, the king let him off, erasing the debt.

The servant was no sooner out of the room when he came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him ten dollars. He seized him by the throat and demanded, “Pay up. Now!”

The poor wretch threw himself down and begged, “Give me a chance and I’ll pay it all back.” But he wouldn’t do it. He had him arrested and put in jail until the debt was paid. When the other servants saw this going on, they were outraged and brought a detailed report to the king.

The king summoned the man and said, “You evil servant! I forgave your entire debt when you begged me for mercy. Shouldn’t you be compelled to be merciful to your fellow servant who asked for mercy?” The king was furious and put the screws to the man until he paid back his entire debt.

— Matthew 18:23-34 (The Message)
Forgiven people forgive others.
It’s easier to forgive when you understand how much God has forgiven you.

“I forgive you” doesn’t mean “What you did was okay.”
If it were okay, it wouldn’t need to be forgiven.

Forgiveness doesn’t put a relationship back to where it was.
People grow through grief, and relationships change. Forgiveness moves you forward, not back.

You don’t have to be perfect before you offer forgiveness to others.
We recognize our common sinfulness, and we offer forgiveness from a humble heart.

Forgiveness does not erase the consequences of the crime.
Your parents can forgive you for sneaking out and still ground you.

FIVE PRINCIPLES OF FORGIVENESS