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# Everyone Wanting Their Own Way

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Free media and discipleship resources for pastors, leaders, and growing disciples.

## Everyone Wanting Their Own Way

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Jon was 14, a handsome, tough young man. A likable guy, he noticed the pictures on the wall of my office and asked what it took to graduate from the college I'd attended. Someday he wanted to be a professional man, he said. I found out that he liked sports, reading, and church, and had lots of friends.

But when it came to talking about his folks, his eyes became slits, his lips pressed into a line, and his voice raised a couple of levels as he shrilled, "I hate them!"

Jon's parents had visited me earlier. They were concerned because there was constant friction between them and Jon. When he cleaned his room, he never did a thorough job. If they asked him to cut the grass, it would take four days. The previous Sunday, he had refused to wear his best pants to church, and instead he wore jeans.

Jon's insubordination made his parents furious, they admitted. Jon got furious in return, and usually he wouldn't do what he was told until they threatened to punish him.

"Why do you hate your folks?" I asked Jon.

He seemed to know the reason very well.

"They want me to jump whenever they say. If I go out and come in five minutes late, one of them is waiting with an angry sermon. I'm not supposed to fight with my brother, but they fight with each other. Dad works late a lot and never lets Mom know. She gets mad and we eat without him.

"Dad throws his clothes around, and Mom picks up after him, but she makes me hang up my clothes. The back door needed the handle fixed all summer, and Dad hasn't fixed it yet. But I'm supposed to do everything right now. My mom will sometimes tell me I can go out, and Dad comes home and tells me I can't."

If Jon's story was true, it was a picture of each one in the family for himself. Mom wanted her way, Dad his, and Jon his. Jon got jumped on constantly for following the same pattern as his folks followed.

When I told Jon's parents about his explanation of the home situation, they were furious and embarrassed. Eventually, they came around to recognizing it as the truth.

What was needed in this family is described beautifully in Colossians 3:13, "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

Jon's folks began to see their problem as a family civil war—with each side wanting to win. The parents proceeded, repentantly, to straighten out the disagreements between themselves, asking God to give them a loving spirit toward each other. They are on the road to a solution, but Jon may be as bad off as ever.

"I'll change if they do," he says stubbornly. He still needs to apply Colossians 3:13 to his own life. And his hate is a sin before God. With God's standard and his parents' good example before him, Jon has no excuse whatsoever; but he needs to make the decision himself.

[Dr. Henry Brandt shares insights from various counseling sessions with parents. The names and certain details in these true case histories have been changed to protect each person's identity and privacy.]