

Called to Parent My Young Adult

Opening Prayer

May you be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. May you be strengthened with all power according to God's might, all endurance, all patience, and all joy, giving thanks to God, who is the source of all that is good. Amen.

Scripture Theme

It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed. (Deuteronomy 31:8)

Introduction

Congratulations! Your son or daughter is “launching” off to college, or into the work world, or to the military, or . . . what? So how can you help them (and yourself) be ready for the challenging times ahead? You may have heard horror stories about kids who have “lost their faith” or made serious mistakes as they enter this season in life. You may have been one of them once a long time ago. But how do we equip our children for this important stage of life? How can you help your child launch successfully into young adulthood? And how is your call from God as a parents shifting?

In her article [Finding Your Place as a Parent of Adult Children](#), Kim Sullivan writes,

You've bathed them, changed their diapers, stayed up sleepless nights, and taken care of their every need. Then one day, you're expected to completely let go. They declare, even demand, total independence. Even if a parent has gradually prepared their child to live independent and successful lives, often we feel abandoned, depressed, and disoriented when our nest empties. . . . It's not the end of parenting, but the beginning of a new season. Parenting adult children is only a new season, just like the toddler season, the “why” season, and the rebellious teen years. Some of your most exciting days are ahead!

It's true. It's a new season of parenting, and a new season of calling. So, what is your call at this stage? That's the focus of this reflection. As you have likely learned by now, each stage of your child's life has meant not just an adjustment to your parenting strategies and approaches, but a realignment of your vocational call as parent. Let's explore what that realignment might be now.

At certain times in your life you may have carried the assumption that God calls you *once*, for just one purpose. Don't miss the call, or you might spend the remainder of your days in meaningless mediocrity. In reality, it is safe to say that God calls us many times throughout the

seasons of our lives, and each call challenges us to stretch further than we might have anticipated or imagined.

So, congratulations! Your teenager has become a young adult, and whether moving out or not, he or she is certainly ready to 'launch' into the world, and thus your call in parenting has shifted again. And, like previous stages, as you respond to this call your young adult will teach you things about life and God and faith that you will grow to treasure. Place your trust in God, say 'yes' to the call as best you can, and give it your all.

What's Changing?

In his book *Managing Transitions*, William Bridges writes that transitions always start with an ending. Seems odd, yes, but he maintains that the first step toward a life change is identifying what you are losing and learning how to manage the losses. As your child launches, it may make you feel sad and lonely, mixed with a healthy dose of anxiety. Normal . . . but pay attention to those feelings, as they are indicators of a life change.

Consider

Take a look at Kelsi Kellen's article "Parenting Transitions: Dealing with the Empty Nest" (<http://bit.ly/2lSkNcR>). She offers four helpful ideas to those who are "struggling to say goodbye with a smile."

- ◆ First, your child is not leaving you completely!
- ◆ Second, just as your child is becoming more independent, you are given the opportunity to take back some of your independence.
- ◆ Third, this transition includes developing a new relationship with your child.
- ◆ Four, adjust to the "Empty Nest" by finding strength in your faith, engaging in self-care, strengthen your romantic relationship, join other groups in the community.

Write and/or Discuss

Take some notes or share with others your responses to these questions:

- ◆ The author recommends that let your child begin "taking flight," even to "gently push your child out of the nest." Your thoughts on this?
- ◆ As your child becomes more independent, you can take back some of your independence. Does this free or frighten you?
- ◆ How do you imagine your relationship with your child will change as s/he launches?

Reflect

As your calling in parenthood shifts, and you embrace the changes in your child, in yourself, and in your family, reflect on . . .

- ◆ One thing I really look forward to . . .
- ◆ One thing that I have a lot of apprehension about . . .
- ◆ About myself, I think I am learning that . . .
- ◆ About my child, I think I am learning that . . .

All these wonderments and anxieties are normal. It's part of the shifting process. Acknowledge them and recognize that God is present in them. And pray for trust that God will re-mold you into the authentic parent that your child needs and deserves.

Take Heart

Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you. (Deuteronomy 31.6)

What's Emerging in My Life?

Let's consider what might be emerging in your life as a result of these changes. As we do so, let us remember a few things that others have discovered about God's callings in their lives. We can say that responding to God's call will likely . . .

- ◆ Lead to happiness in the long run. If it makes you depressed, it's likely not God's call. Although it won't make you immune to all other emotions such as sadness, frustration, resentment, guilt, etc. But if there is no happiness whatsoever, somehow you are not aligned with God's desire.
- ◆ Not be easy. It will probably stretch you toward something you never thought you could do or be. But you can do it, especially if you have some help.
- ◆ Benefit others besides yourself. If it only involves you, it's not God's call. This is baked-in to parenting at all stages.
- ◆ Not be overly complicated. You'll be able to explain it to others in just a few words.

Consider

Let's focus on the third bullet point: not be easy, but certainly possible. Discerning God's call at this stage of parenting and family life is challenging for both you and your young adult child. And to some degree, the success of one is intertwined with the success of the other. Yet God has a purpose in mind, at this point in time, for both of you, albeit, likely a separate purpose for each of you. And perhaps therein lies the rub.

In her article [Finding Your Place as a Parent of Adult Children](#) Kim Sullivan writes,

There is life after full-time parenting! Sometimes this includes new goals and dreams and visions that you had unselfishly put aside. I remember feeling like my life was over once I finished homeschooling my last child. I had immersed myself in my role for many years, and it took some time for me to realize I still had much to offer in the Lord's service. God still has big things for you to do!

Your path has returned you to an intersection of opportunities, and crossroads are often where the greatest things happen! Your role in life cannot define you, only God says who you are. You belong to God and are called for God's purpose. Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

You are called to be a child for God's purpose. You are called to be a student for God's purpose. You are called to be a spouse for God's purpose. You are called to be a parent for God's purpose. Whatever stage or role in life that you find yourself in, you are called to God's purpose. God still has great purpose for you apart from parenthood, but also in this new season of parenting adults. Rely on God to know when to speak, when to stay silent. When to help, when to allow consequences to teach lessons louder than our words. After all, God cares about your kids even more than you do!

Write and/or Discuss

Discerning and responding to God's call comes down to alignment. Here are three questions that require some deep thought and reflection:

- ◆ How do I align my ideas for my life with God's ideas for my life?
- ◆ How do I align my ideas for my young adult child with God's idea for her/him?
- ◆ How do I align the things I am doing in the world with the things God is doing in the world?

Take Heart

And what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6.8)?

How Should I Live?

Now we seek to turn the corner and fully embrace the call. We seek to develop fruitful patterns of behavior and action that bring fulfillment and grace to you, your young adult, and the family as a whole.

Watch

Take a look at the short video by author Andy Crouch, "Andy Crouch on Parenting Young Adults" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e2ovKmYdrww>). He reflects on the changing tempo of parenting young adults.

Write and/or Discuss

- ◆ Do you agree with Andy that there is a significant shift in parenting approach from teenagers to you young adults?
- ◆ It is realistic (for you and your child) to do the conversation exercise (or something similar) that Andy describes?

Consider

In her article "Top questions to ask college students before they head to school" (<https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/blog/questions-college-students>), Kara Powell points to research that shows the incredible importance of the first two weeks in college. During these crucial first fourteen days, students make key decisions about sex, drinking, and other high-risk behaviors as well as about allegiance with a local church or on-campus ministry. Young adults

make decisions during those two weeks that can set them on a trajectory that may last the rest of their college experience. Click on the link and read the short article.

Write and/or Discuss

- ◆ After reading this article, what feelings surface for you?
- ◆ Do the questions makes sense to you? Can you ask them of your child as s/he prepares to “launch”?

Consider

Here are links to helpful practices and strategies for responding to the call of parenting a young adult.

- ◆ *Launching College Kids* by Kim Sullivan. <https://familyfire.reframemedia.com/articles/launching-college-kids>. How do we equip our children for this important stage of life? How can you help your child launch successfully into college life?
- ◆ *Finding Your Place as a Parent of Adult Children* by Kim Sullivan. <https://familyfire.reframemedia.com/articles/finding-your-place-as-a-parent-of-adult-children>. It's not the end of parenting, but the beginning of a new season.
- ◆ *Parenting After the Adolescent Becomes Adult* by Carl E Pickhardt Ph.D. <http://bit.ly/2Ld8piK>. After adolescence, parenting adult children remains challenging and complex.
- ◆ *Adult Children Living at Home: How to Manage Without Going Crazy* by Debbie Pincus. <http://bit.ly/2XF8Pp3>. Find out how you can manage your adult children at home effectively—and how you'll know when it's time for them to leave.
- ◆ *How to Pray for Your Adult Children | Six Bible Verses to Use*. <https://emptynestblessed.com/2017/05/10/pray>. When our children leave the nest, fear and anxiety can set in for us as parents. Here are the six passages I come back to again and again as I pray for my adult children.
- ◆ *Empty Nest: From a Single Parent's Perspective* by Debra Mitchell. <http://bit.ly/2NebVfv>. Empty nest is synonymous with grief. Grief isn't just about death and loss, it's about change. Even when the change is something wonderful, something is getting left behind.
- ◆ *The Prayer of a Mom Whose Nest Will Soon be Empty*. <https://club31women.com/the-prayer-of-a-mom-whose-nest-will-soon-be-empty>. When that time is nearing when the last child will fly, God's comfort is there to surround you.

Take heart

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:2).

Blessing for Parents of Young Adults

This blessing may be used with a small group or with the entire congregation.

To the Parents

Dear parents, your child is launching into the world. Whether leaving the nest or staying home, your child is now an adult, ready to take the reins of his or her own life. And so, you are called to hand over the reins. No easy task for any parent. Today, we bless you and pledge our prayers and support for you.

To the Community Gathered

Please extend your hand in blessing over these parents. We thank God for them, for all the ways they model God's unconditional love for us. Please respond with "Amen" to each blessing.

To the Parents

We bless you as you recall when you gave birth to your child, brought baby home, and allowed your child to take over your entire world.

Amen.

We bless you as you recall those two-year-old moments when your child first discovered a bit of independence, resistance, and personality of their own.

Amen.

We bless you as you recall when you first sent your child off to school, and you were called upon to share influence with others the lessons of life for you child.

Amen.

We bless you as you recall the early adolescent years when your child searched and searched for a place in the world, and no matter how you expressed that "It's still here, with me, with us!" somehow your message could not be heard.

Amen.

We bless you as you recall your child's high school graduation, and the pride that swelled your heart as s/he walked across the stage, and the flip-flops in your stomach wondering what's next.

Amen.

We bless you today as you are called to let go of the reins and give wings to your child's dreams, knowing that your child still has deep roots with you, your family, and this community.

Amen.

And we further bless you today as *you* explore new ways to respond to God's call in your life, knowing full well that you will also readily respond to your child's call.

Amen.

Closing Prayer

O God, we are truly grateful for your gracious presence in the lives of these parents and their young adult children. And we are confident that you will continue to guide and protect them as they launch into this new stage of their lives. Amen.