

# Adult Child Returns Home

**Dear Facilitator:** For several weeks we have been discussing how successful families communicate, support one another, and organize their lives. This week we are going to focus on how to handle when an adult child returns home.

It might be helpful for you to know what we hope to accomplish through this lesson. Participants will:


1. Develop healthy boundaries with adult children.
2. Create six steps to SANITY.

During the past lessons, we have made commitment statements. This week's commitment statement is: Parents and children can live together with respect and a plan for the future.


We pray that God will give you direction and clarity as you prepare the lesson and activities. We hope that the families in your group will grow together in God's love and become a source of friendship and support for one another.

*Blessings*


## Welcome 5 minutes

 **Say:** Welcome back! I hope it's been a good week for all of you as you have been working diligently on many things that are positively influencing your family.

Last week we spent time learning what the Bible says about discipline.

 **Ask:** Did anyone try something this past week that made a positive difference in your family that you would be willing to share?


## Introduction 5 minutes

 **Ask the children:** What do you want to be when you grow up?

**Ask parents:** As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

**Ask the children:** Where do you want to live when you grow up?

**Ask children and parents:** At what age are you grown up? In some places of the world, children never leave the house in which they were raised. In fact, as they get married, the family simply adds rooms on the house, making room for the married couple. Today, in our society, at a certain age, children move out of the house and get their own place to live. However, that is not always the case.

 **Ask:** How does this information compare to your family? Because of the change, we want to talk about what to do when your adult child returns home.

1. Develop healthy boundaries with adult children.
2. Create six steps to SANITY.

## Family & Table Talk 20 minutes

Depending on the age of your children, discuss what they hope to do or become when they move out of the house.

*After the meal, children are dismissed to their group.*

40 minutes	
Parent Training	
Family Time	ADULT CHILD RETURNS HOME

Adapted from Object Lessons for Every Occasion: (p. 82-83)  
What does it mean to “burn the candle at both ends?”

Light the candle on both ends; place the burning candle on a safe place.

What happens when both ends are lit?

You get used up.

What happens to the wax as the candle burns from both ends?

It drips and makes a mess.

Is there a holder for this type of candle?

No.

When you are incredibly busy, it feels like you are burning a candle on both ends.

Our scripture passage tonight is found in Deuteronomy 6:4-9. It says, *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are*

*to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”*

Imagine this, your last child is off to college, and finally your house is quite empty without any children home.

You begin to find a new routine to your “free” lifestyle until one day when you get a text from your middle child. She is trying to save money for a house and would like to come back to your home and live. Or, your oldest discovers he has an illness and is no longer able to care for himself. What do you do?

All of the sudden, it can feel like you are burning the candle on both ends. You have your everyday work to accomplish, church

## Notes

activities, relationships, and small groups, but now you add caring for your adult child.

A few months ago, when all the children were gone, you developed a new rhythm of living. Now, it feels like you do not have a place to call your own—there is nowhere to get away. It's like a candle, burning on both ends, that does not have a firm place to stand.

It might surprise you, but this is happening to more and more families.

The way we live life today makes us incredibly busy. Today, we are going to focus on setting boundaries for when your adult child returns home. These boundaries are good for whether your adult child returns home for good reasons or because something has gone wrong.

Allison Bottke, author of *Setting Boundaries with Your Adult Children*, is a mom who had a child caught up in drugs. Through her years of experience with her son, she realized her part in contributing to the problem. Now don't misunderstand—her son made the choice to do drugs; her mistake was enabling him.

Enabling is when you do something for another that the other can do for himself or herself. For example, intervening so that the child does not experience the tough consequence of the mistake.

Another example of enabling would be when a parent comes to the rescue of a child by giving money for rent when the child has already spent money on other things. Bottke created **SANITY**, which helps us to remember steps we can take to create healthy boundaries.

**S** = Stop your own negative behavior.

**A** = Assemble a support group.

**N** = Nip excuses in the bud.

**I** = Implement rules and boundaries.

**T** = Trust your instincts.

**Y** = Yield everything to God.

Let's explain the steps more fully.

**S** = Stop your own negative behavior.

What this means is to stop intervening so that the child can face the natural consequences of mistakes.

It also means to stop ignoring your own issues.

Try to figure out why you keep coming to your child's rescue. Is it because:

- Some guilt for mistakes you made as a parent, so you need to compensate?
- You are trying to buy your child's love?
- You are trying to be loved more than the other parent?
- You were deprived as a child and do not want your child to experience the same?
- Lack of trust in God that He will help your child figure out a solution?

**A** = Assemble a support group.

Find a group that is going through similar issues or find a Christian counselor. When meeting with others, you will find similar circumstances and receive support to remain strong in your decisions.

**N** = Nip excuses in the bud.

Do not be swayed by lame excuses such as "It is not my fault" or "Things are different today."

**I** = Implement rules and boundaries.

It is not easy, but it is important for you to detach from someone else's problems. Also, you need to communicate your boundaries to your child through a contract. When we are finished with **SANITY**, we will look at the components of the plan.

**T** = Trust your instincts.

If your gut is telling you that something is not right, follow it.

**Y** = Yield everything to God.

As God is working in and through your life, trust that



## *Scripture* SUPPORT

### **Proverbs 13:24**

*Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them.*

### **1 John 3:18**

*Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.*

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He is also working through your child's life. If you keep "helping," you might be getting in the way of God's work in your child's life.

Note: As you work through these steps, allow time for discussion.

Jim Newheiser and Elyse Fitzpatrick wrote *You Never Stop Being a Parent*. Within the book, they provide examples for a contract that can be used between you and your child.

### **Expectations:**

1. Explain how much time will be spent doing work around the house, school, or employment.
2. Create a goal for this stage of life (i.e. education/savings).
3. Everyone will be treated with respect.
4. Common courtesy will be practiced. Each will let the other know where you are and when you expect to be home.
5. No illegal activities allowed.
6. Financially contribute to the family expenses.
7. Be honest so that trust can develop.

### **Consequences:**

1. Extra work around the house.
2. Fines.
3. Restitution.
4. Taking away cell phone, computer, car, etc.
5. If will not follow rules, you are choosing to no longer live at home.

**What you will provide:**

1. Clear expectations
2. Will not nag or scold
3. Biblical principles of peace keeping
4. Will not micromanage his life
5. Will listen
6. Will admit when wrong
7. Will assume the best
8. Will make home a place of joy and fun

As time allows, begin working through the contract.

**SUMMARY**

We covered a lot of material in the lesson.

Our objectives were to:

1. Develop healthy boundaries with adult children.
2. Create six steps to SANITY.

During the past few lessons, we have made commitment statements. This week's commitment statement is: Parents and children can live together with respect and a plan for the future.

To end our lesson, please answer the following:

1. Who has an insight tonight about something you've learned or want to try?
2. What will you change or improve in your role as a parent this week?

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Ages 4-16	40 minutes
Student Training	
Family Time	ADULT CHILD RETURNS HOME

## Objectives

- Help children be aware of milestones of growing up.
- Help children be aware of what it means to be growing up.
- Help children be aware of what it means to be an adult.
- Help children be aware of the need to pray about their future.
- Help children be aware of what happens when an adult child returns home.

From the day children are born, their parents love them! They provide for their children and support them in every way possible. Christian parents realize that they are partnering with God to make sure their children grow up to become everything God created them to be.

In Proverbs 22:6, God says, “Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.” Parents have been given a command from God to teach their children according to what the Bible teaches.

Parents are delighted and proud when their little ones reach and conquer each milestone they come to in life. One of

their first major achievements is attending and completing kindergarten! Later, they successfully complete elementary and middle school. All along life’s path, the child is growing up. That means the child is gradually learning to accept more and more responsibility. However, the Bible instruction the child is learning from the parents is most important. Critical lessons like learning to pray, to read the Bible, to attend church, and to worship and praise God will be the true deciding factor in the young adult’s success in life.

Then comes the next major accomplishment—graduating from high school. Parents, family members, and friends are overjoyed and celebrate this



momentous occasion with the child. Their young son or daughter is considered grown and has now reached what is called “adulthood.” For the young adult, it is time to put 1 Corinthians 13:11 into action, which says, “When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.” By this time, hopefully, this young adult has established a strong relationship with God. In order to meet the challenges of being grown, God will need to be kept first in the young adult’s life.

Being an adult means being able to handle daily life responsibilities, and adults are not looking for others to bail them out when they find themselves in a tight spot. As adults, they are expected to be held accountable for their choices, decisions, and actions. They must also be able to provide for their basic needs and wants. Soon after graduation, it is time for them to move out of their parents’ home to live on their own and begin their new life of independence. This is a big step, but God reassures His young Christians in Jeremiah 29:11 with this promise: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” For many young adults headed for college, their new address will be their college dormitory. And for those who have decided not to go to college and have been hired into their first real job, they find the perfect apartment that will be their new living quarters.

In either case, proud parents with hope-filled hearts lend their support as they cheer their precious son or daughter on his or her way. Christian parents remind their adult child that Proverbs 16:3 says, “Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.”

At home parents are beginning a new life of becoming parents to an adult. They love their adult child, and they realize that an important part of becoming an adult is moving out into the world. Parents back out of the picture and give their adult child more space. They need to be allowed to handle the pressures of being a grown up. Some newly

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ousted sons and daughters may at first be a bit anxious but rapidly come to enjoy being their own commander.

Everyone is different. Some young adults have no problem moving into a meaningful and rewarding career that allows them to meet their financial responsibilities and provide for their upkeep. Others may need a bit more time to come out from under their parents' provision, restrictions, and protection. For most, the transition goes smoothly, and the adult child takes his rightful place in society.

As time passes, some adult children graduate from college and land the perfect job. Another marries and has a young family. All seems to be going well. But in some cases, the parents get a call from their adult child asking if they can move back home for a while. Something in their plan has not gone well. This is disappointing to the parents, but this is a perfect case where a parent's unconditional love is necessary. Although, the parents are disheartened about their adult child's return home, in most cases, the individual returning home is embarrassed and hurting. In times like these, Proverbs 3:5-6 reminds the adult child and parents to "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."

Adult children return home for many reasons. Some of the returnees have run out of funds to pay their college tuition, fees, and other costs. They need time to work and save some money to continue their studies. Others may be having difficulty finding the right job that pays enough to meet their monthly expenses. Still others may be facing personal problems such as illness, divorce, addiction, and more. Whatever the reason, as they pray about this unfortunate circumstance, the parents open their hearts and offer their home as a place of refuge to their adult child. Christian parents know that the Bible teaches us to not worry about anything, but instead to talk to God about our problem and ask for His help and guidance (Philippians 4:6).

Parents and adult children hope this situation never happens, but if it does, the best thing to do is to develop a plan where all people involved set fair, reasonable rules and discuss expectations. During this season, parents can use this time to establish a relationship with their grown-up child and get to know them as an adult. The good news is that adult children generally only return home for a short time. With God's help, most of them are soon confident and ready to move back out on their own and try again.

We don't always know why we experience disappointments or why things don't work out the way we plan, but God gives us this promise in Romans 8:28: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." As long as we continue to love and trust God, all things—even things that cause us sadness and disappointment—will work for our good! Psalm 28:7 says, "The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him." The key is seeking God and loving and trusting Him.

## DISCUSS

- When is a child considered an adult?
- What are the new responsibilities of the adult child?
- Why are adult children expected to move out of their parents' home?
- When adult children move out of their parents' home, where do they live?
- Why do some adult children return home?
- What should parents and adult children do if the adult child returns home?

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## Scripture SUPPORT

### Proverbs 22:6

*Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.*

### 1 Corinthians 13:11

*When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.*

### Jeremiah 29:11

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

### Proverbs 16:3

*Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.*



## Activities

### AGES 4-11

#### Materials

Whiteboard or easel, with erasable markers  
“My Plan For Success” worksheet  
Pencils, crayons, markers

#### After lesson discussion, have children view

**YouTube videos:** (discuss briefly)

1. <https://youtu.be/kw-ABtfWC3U>
2. <https://youtu.be/hMs1YBOEjMY>

- Explain to the children that in some cases adult children may need to return home; however, that is not the best opportunity for success for an adult child. Tell them it is important to make a plan that helps them write a vision for their life and practice good habits that will help their vision become a reality. Then with God’s help, they will not be an adult child that needs to return home.
- As a group, fill in the blanks on the worksheet. Solicit ideas from the group. Have children agree, then write the responses on the board. Children can copy the answers from the board to fill in the blanks on their “My Plan for Success” worksheet. Children can add any other ideas to their plan that they like.
- Have children share their plan.

## AGES 12-16

### Materials

"My Plan For Success" worksheet

Pencils, crayons, or markers

### After lesson discussion, have children view

**YouTube videos:** (discuss briefly)

1. <https://youtu.be/kw-ABtfWC3U>
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- Explain to the children that in some cases adult children may need to return home; however, that is not the best opportunity for success for an adult child. Tell them it is important to make a plan that helps them write a vision for their life and practice good habits that will help their vision become a reality. Then with God's help, they will not be an adult child that needs to return home.
  - Guide children individually in filling out their "My Plan for Success" worksheet. As they fill it out, talk them through it. Walk around the room to encourage them. Notice what they are writing. Dialogue about it.



### *Scripture* SUPPORT

#### **Proverbs 3:5-6**

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*

#### **Philippians 4:6**

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*

#### **Romans 8:28**

*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

#### **Psalms 28:7**

*The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him.*



### CHALLENGE QUESTION

AM I DOING THE THINGS I NEED TO DO TODAY  
TO PLAN FOR TOMORROW?

### CHALLENGE COMMITMENT

WHAT ARE YOU GOING  
TO DO TO WORK ON THE CHALLENGE  
QUESTION THIS WEEK?



**AFFIRMATION** *Have children repeat:*

*God has great plans  
for my life!*

# Resources & Materials

- *When Our Grown Kids Disappoint Us: Letting Go of Their Problems, Loving Them Anyway, and Getting on with Our Lives*  
—Jane Adams
- *You Never Stop Being a Parent: Thriving in Relationship With Your Adult Children*  
—Elyse Fitzpatrick
- *How to Really Love Your Adult Child: Building a Healthy Relationship in a Changing World*  
—Gary Chapman
- *Setting Boundaries® with Your Adult Children: Six Steps to Hope and Healing for Struggling Parents*  
—Allison Bottke
- *Object Lessons for Every Occasion*  
—Sheryl Bruinsma, Baker
- **Candle & Matches:** Pull the wick out of the bottom so that you can burn both ends (get permission to do this in your building).

## MY PLAN FOR SUCCESS

*"Commit your activities to the LORD, and your plans will be achieved." Proverbs 16:3*

### 1. SCHOOL GOALS

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### 2. HOME GOALS

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### 3. SPIRITUAL GOALS

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### 4. EXTRA-CURRICULAR GOALS

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