

RESPOND TO CONFLICT AS AN AMBASSADOR OF JESUS CHRIST

NAVIGATING Parent & Adult Child CONFLICT



Study Guide for Parents

You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock. Isaiah 26:3-4

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Session 1 – Understanding the Shift

Principle:

As children mature into adults, the parent-child dynamic transitions. This evolution calls for mutual respect, understanding, the leading of the Holy Spirit, and a foundation rooted in Jesus' teachings about love and relationships.

Promise:

Embracing this shift can lead to a deeper, more mature relationship, based on mutual respect and understanding, allowing both parents and adult children to grow in their faith and connection with each other.

Playbook & Scriptures:

1. Recognize the Growth: Accept that your child has matured with experiences and insights of their own. Relate this to how believers grow in their understanding of God's Word. (Ephesians 4:15: "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ.")
2. Respect Their Autonomy: Understand that they have their own lives, decisions, and families. Reflect on how Jesus respected the choices and paths of those He encountered. (Galatians 5:13: "For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.")
3. Seek Understanding Over Advising: Aim to understand their perspective without immediately giving advice. (James 1:19: "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.")
4. Rely on Jesus and the Holy Spirit: Turn to Christ and the Holy Spirit for guidance in navigating this relationship shift. (John 16:13: "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth.")
5. Celebrate the New Dynamic: Appreciate the unique bond that can be formed with adult children. Remember how Jesus, even in His divinity, maintained a deep connection with His disciples as friends. (John 15:15: "No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.")

Prompt:

Reflect on your relationship with Jesus and how it has matured over time. How has your understanding and reliance on Him grown? This week, approach a conversation with your adult child with the goal of understanding and connecting, seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit before and during your interaction.

Session 2: Set Boundaries with Love

Principle:

Just as God has given us free will and boundaries within His love, parents must learn to set boundaries with their adult children that honor their autonomy while still expressing love and care.

Promise:

By setting boundaries rooted in love and respect, both parents and adult children can maintain a healthy relationship that displays mutual understanding and trust.

Playbook:

1. **Recognize the Need for Boundaries:** Understand that boundaries are a sign of respect, not rejection. Consider how God set boundaries for us, not to restrict but to protect. (2 Corinthians 10:13: "But we will not boast beyond limits but will boast only with regard to the area of influence God assigned to us.")
2. **Pursue Open Dialogue:** Discuss boundaries openly with your adult child, ensuring mutual understanding. Use Christ's model of clear communication with His disciples. (Matthew 5:37: "Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.")
3. **Establish Boundaries with Grace:** When setting boundaries, approach the situation with grace and love, reflecting Jesus' compassion for you. (Colossians 4:6: "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.")
4. **Let the Holy Spirit Guide You:** When unsure about setting or respecting a boundary, ask for wisdom from the Holy Spirit. (Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths.")
5. **Maintain Connection:** While boundaries are essential, ensure they don't become barriers. Continually nurture the relationship, just as Jesus consistently seeks a relationship with us. (Revelation 3:20: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.")

Prompt:

Reflect on a situation where boundaries were crossed or were unclear between you and your adult child. How could that situation have been navigated differently? This week, if necessary, have a loving conversation about boundaries, seeking the Holy Spirit's guidance before and during the dialogue.

Session 3: Effective Communication in Adulthood

Principle:

As both parent and child mature, communication becomes less about instruction and more about mutual understanding, somewhat similar to how Jesus engaged with His disciples in the later stages of His earthly ministry.

Promise:

By applying God's grace and using effective, respectful communication, parents and adult children can deepen their bond and navigate challenges with understanding and grace.

Playbook:

1. **Active Listening:** Prioritize listening and understanding over immediate responses or judgments. Reflect on Jesus' patient listening to His followers. (James 1:19: "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.")
2. **Speak with Love and Respect:** Even in disagreements, let love be the foundation of every conversation. (Ephesians 4:15: "Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.")
3. **Seek Clarity:** Avoid assumptions and ask open-ended questions to understand their perspective fully. Jesus often asked questions to promote understanding and reflection. (Luke 2:49: "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?")
4. **Acknowledge Differences:** Accept that your adult child will have their own opinions. It's essential to respect differences and find common ground when necessary. (Romans 14:1: "Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters.")
5. **Rely on the Holy Spirit for Guidance:** In challenging conversations, lean on the Holy Spirit for wisdom and restraint. (John 14:26: "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.")

Prompt:

Reflect on a recent conversation with your adult child. Were there moments of misunderstanding? How might the principles of effective communication have altered that conversation? This week, intentionally practice one of the communication strategies above in a discussion with your adult child, inviting the Holy Spirit's guidance.

Session 4: Family Roles Change

Principle:

As families grow and mature, roles within the family change.

Promise:

By embracing changing roles and expectations, families can experience deeper unity, mutual respect, and shared purpose, just as the body of Christ is made up of diverse parts working in harmony.

Playbook:

1. **Recognize the Shifts:** Understand that as everyone grows, family roles shift. Reflect on the varying roles the disciples took on as the early church grew. (1 Corinthians 12:4-6: "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.")
2. **Express Feelings and Expectations:** Open dialogue about any uncertainties or feelings concerning changing roles. Speak with love and grace. (Ephesians 4:25: "Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.")
3. **Respect New Roles:** Honor the new roles adult children might be taking on, such as parenthood, marriage, or career advancements. (Romans 12:4-5: "For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body.")
4. **Seek Wisdom in Transition:** In moments of confusion or challenge, turn to scripture and the Holy Spirit for guidance on navigating evolving roles. (James 1:5: "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.")
5. **Celebrate Each Other's Growth:** Just as Paul celebrated the growth of early Christian communities, take joy in the development and new roles of family members. (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20: "For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.")

Prompt:

Reflect on the changing roles within your family. Are there new responsibilities or positions your adult child has taken on that you're still adjusting to? This week, initiate a conversation acknowledging and celebrating these changes, and discuss any feelings or uncertainties that come up, always leaning on the Holy Spirit for guidance.

Session 5: Outside Influences

Principle:

Throughout life, families will encounter various external influences that may affect their dynamics and relationships. Just as the early Christian church faced external challenges, parents and adult children can navigate these influences together, rooted in faith and trust.

Promise:

With Christ at the center, families can address outside influences with discernment and unity, ensuring that these external forces do not strain the familial bond.

Playbook:

1. **Recognize the Influence:** Identify and acknowledge any external factors impacting your relationship with your adult child. Paul often warned the early church about external influences. (Colossians 2:8: "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.")
2. **Open Conversations:** Establish a space for open dialogue to discuss any concerns or changes you or your adult child may be feeling due to outside influences. (James 1:19: "My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.")
3. **Stay Rooted in Scripture:** When faced with challenges or questions arising from external influences, turn to the Bible for guidance and clarity. (Psalm 119:105: "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.")
4. **Pray for Discernment:** Seek the Holy Spirit's guidance in navigating and understanding these influences. (John 16:13: "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth.")
5. **Strengthen Family Bonds:** Prioritize spending quality time together, fostering unity and reinforcing your family's core values against any potential disruptions. (Ecclesiastes 4:12: "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.")

Prompt:

Reflect on recent external influences that might have impacted your relationship with your adult child. How did you address these? This week, engage in a conversation with your adult child about these influences, seeking clarity and understanding, always with Jesus and the Holy Spirit as your guide.

Session 6: The Holy Spirit's Role

Principle:

The Holy Spirit is our Comforter, Teacher, and Guide. He never leaves us or forsakes us. Embracing and following the Holy Spirit's guidance can be pivotal in navigating conflict between parents and their adult children.

Promise:

By actively seeking and relying on the Holy Spirit, parents and adult children can find clarity, compassion, and peace, even in the midst of disagreements.

Playbook:

1. **Seek the Spirit's Wisdom:** In moments of uncertainty or tension, turn first to the Holy Spirit for guidance and understanding. (John 14:26: "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.")
2. **Practice Spirit-Led Patience:** Respond to disagreements with patience, allowing the Holy Spirit to shape your reactions. (Galatians 5:22-23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.")
3. **Listen for Conviction:** Stay sensitive to the Holy Spirit's convicting power, helping you recognize when you might be in the wrong. (John 16:8: "When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment.")
4. **Pursue Peace:** Actively seek peace and reconciliation, inspired by the reconciliation God the Father established with us through Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:18-19: "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.")
5. **Pray in the Spirit:** In moments of tension, pause and pray together, inviting the Holy Spirit to bring clarity and unity to the situation. (Romans 8:26: "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.")

Prompt:

Reflect on a recent disagreement or tension with your adult child. How might inviting the Holy Spirit into that situation have changed its outcome? This week, intentionally seek the Spirit's guidance in your interactions, remembering that He is present in every relationship and conversation.

Session 7: Letting Go

Principle:

As parents of adult children, one of the profound challenges is learning to release control and place trust both in the foundations you've laid in your child's life and in God's sovereign plan for them.

Promise:

When parents practice the art of letting go and trusting in God's direction for their adult child, it paves the way for peace, deepens faith, and strengthens the parent-child bond.

Playbook:

1. **Acknowledge Your Feelings:** Recognize and accept the emotions associated with letting go, understanding it's a natural part of the parenting journey. (Psalm 62:8: "Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.")
2. **Celebrate Their Journey:** Focus on the growth, strengths, and positive attributes of your adult child, celebrating their unique path. (3 John 1:4: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.")
3. **Trust God:** Consciously release your adult child into God's hands, trusting in His protection and guidance. (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.")
4. **Stay Connected in Prayer:** Regularly uplift your adult child in prayer, giving thanks for them and agreeing with the Lord that His will for their life will be accomplished. (Philippians 4:6-7: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.")
5. **Embrace the Role Shift:** Transition from director to supporter in your adult child's life, providing guidance when sought, and respect their autonomy. (Ecclesiastes 3:1: "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.")

Prompt:

Reflect on a recent situation where you struggled to let go and trust either in your adult child's choices or in God's plan for them. How might releasing control and trusting God have altered your response? This week, consciously choose one aspect of your adult child's life to release control over, placing it in God's hands and seeking His peace in the process.

Session 8: Heal Past Wounds

Principle:

In the journey of life, past wounds or misunderstandings can leave scars that affect present relationships. Healing often requires revisiting these wounds, not to reopen them, but to allow Christ's redemption and healing to fully manifest.

Promise:

By addressing past hurts with the intent of pursuing peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation, both parents and their adult children can experience a deeper bond and the freedom Christ offers from past burdens.

Playbook:

1. Acknowledge the Hurt: Accept and recognize the existence of past wounds without assigning blame. (Psalm 147:3: "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.")
2. Seek God's Perspective: Before addressing the issue, pray for God's wisdom and understanding to view the situation through His eyes. (James 1:5: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.")
3. Open a Dialogue: Approach the conversation with humility and a genuine desire to understand the other's feelings and perspectives. (James 1:19: "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.")
4. Pursue Peace: Offer forgiveness for any hurt caused and seek forgiveness for past mistakes, allowing the healing power of Christ to mend the rift. (Colossians 3:13: "Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.")
5. Rebuild with Christ as the Cornerstone: As you move forward, ensure that your relationship is grounded in Christ, allowing His love and grace to be the foundation of your renewed bond. (1 Peter 2:4-5: "As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house.")

Prompt:

Reflect on a past wound or misunderstanding that might still be affecting your relationship with your adult child. How can Christ's healing power and God's grace transform this hurt? This week, consider broaching the subject with your adult child, always ensuring you approach it with grace, humility, and an open heart receptive to the Holy Spirit's guidance.

Session 9: Cultivate a New Friendship

Principle:

As children grow into adulthood, the dynamic between parent and child evolves. Embracing this shift allows for the emergence of a new, rewarding friendship built on mutual respect, shared experiences, and the grace/love we receive through Jesus Christ.

Promise:

By intentionally nurturing a friendship with your adult child, you can experience a deeper connection, create new cherished memories, and enrich the enduring bond you share.

Playbook:

1. **Celebrate Their Adulthood:** Acknowledge and commend the adult your child has become, recognizing their achievements and the individual they've grown into. (3 John 1:4: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.")
2. **Share and Listen Actively:** Engage in meaningful conversations, sharing your experiences and genuinely listening to theirs without judgment. (James 1:19: "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.")
3. **Partake in Shared Activities:** Find common interests or activities you both enjoy, fostering camaraderie and shared memories. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10: "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up.")
4. **Respect Their Autonomy:** Understand and respect their decisions, offering guidance only when sought. Embrace the role of an advisor, not a director. (Proverbs 22:6: "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.")
5. **Continually Pray for Them:** Even as friends, maintain your spiritual guardianship by consistently interceding for them and their relationship with God. (Ephesians 6:18: "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.")

Prompt:

Reflect on the current dynamic between you and your adult child. How can you nurture a friendship with them, celebrating the unique bond that exists between parent and child? This week, engage in a shared activity or heartfelt conversation with your adult child, setting the stage for a blossoming friendship under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Session 10: Reconciliation and Restoration

Principle:

Even in the closest relationships, rifts can occur. However, through Christ, reconciliation is possible, and relationships can be restored to a place of grace and peace.

Promise:

By leaning into the power of the Holy Spirit and the gospel of Jesus Christ, parents and their adult children can bridge divides, mend broken ties, and enjoy renewed relationship.

Playbook:

1. **Seek God's Heart First:** Before attempting reconciliation, spend time in prayer and reflection, asking God for wisdom, humility, and a heart that seeks peace. (Philippians 4:6-7: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.")
2. **Initiate the Conversation:** Reach out with genuine intent, focusing on the pursuit of peace and expressing your feelings without placing blame. (Matthew 18:15: "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.")
3. **Listen Actively:** Be attentive to what your adult child shares, valuing their perspective and emotions. (James 1:19: "My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.")
4. **Seek and Offer Forgiveness:** Embrace the power of forgiveness, understanding that through the grace of God we receive through Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven, and we're called to extend that same grace to others. (Ephesians 4:32: "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.")
5. **Commit to Restoration:** Pledge to rebuild trust and strengthen the relationship, grounding the restoration process in prayer and guidance from the Holy Spirit. (1 Peter 5:10: "And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.")

Prompt:

Reflect on an area of strain or disconnect with your adult child. How might the principles of reconciliation and restoration be applied to heal and mend this relationship? This week, ask the Holy Spirit to lead you in a proactive step towards mending the relationship, whether through prayer, initiating a conversation, or pursuing forgiveness.