

GARY CHAPMAN, PhD
& ROSS CAMPBELL, MD

YOUR NEW LIFE with ADULT CHILDREN



A Practical Guide to What Helps,
What Hurts, and What Heals

STUDY GUIDE



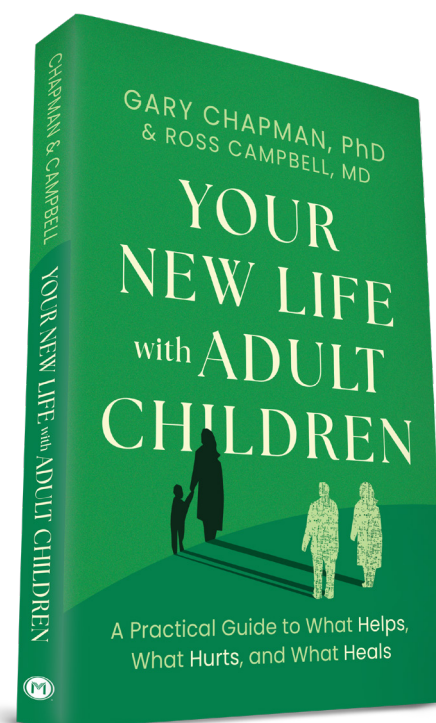
A NOTE *TO THE READER*

This book will cover many situations that affect your parenting of your adult children and offer practical ways to move forward in your relationship with them. Perhaps you already have a healthy relationship, or perhaps things are strained between you. The good news is that in most cases, you can have a positive and growing relationship with your adult children, and even a friendship.

This study guide is designed to enhance your own experience in reading this book and is also conducive to discussions with another person or a small group.

Because of the subject matter, not all scenarios will be relevant to you or to everyone in a group, but you'll almost certainly find something that you or someone you know can relate to.

Following this guide you'll find suggestions for leading a small group.



YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR ADULT CHILD

1. How would you briefly describe your relationship with your adult child? What would you like to improve? How can you build on what's working?
2. "Some parents look to their adult children to meet their own needs" (p. 11). In what ways might parents do this? Have you noticed this tendency in yourself or in another family you know?
3. Three common less-than-ideal tendencies in parenting are examined: overprotection, undermanagement, and micromanagement (pp. 12–20). What are some signs of each of these?

Overprotection:

Undermanagement:

Micromanagement:

What course corrections are available to try for each of these?

CHAPTER 1 CONTINUED

4. Review the basics of each of the 5 Love Languages (pp. 22–24). Which are most pertinent to your adult child? Give an example of how you can speak each of these to your adult child.
5. Are you a Bible reader? Have you realized that there is help in parenting from Scripture? How does the brief section on page 25 give you hope?

WHEN YOUR ADULT CHILD IS STUCK

1. Do you have a “stuck” child? Describe the situation. What is your goal and desire for this child?
2. “Feelings of guilt and anxiety can complicate your relationship with your adult child. It is very important that you come to understand yourself and your emotions” (p. 31). Are you prone to blaming yourself for your child’s problems? Take a moment to read the sidebar on page 31 about parental guilt. How do you react to these words?

Parents plagued by guilt might react inappropriately, e.g., with a hands-off approach and/or with anger. Why is dealing with your own emotions so important? What is the role of self-control?

3. Are you able to understand your son’s or daughter’s point of view? How did Barbara begin to develop an open dialogue with Tyson?

CHAPTER 2 CONTINUED

4. Young adults “want advice, encouragement, and support, but from people they respect. If we as parents are to serve as their mentors, we must remove any barriers that have been built up over time and then learn to communicate” (p. 36). How do you react to these statements? What steps can you take so your child will see you as a helper rather than a controller?
5. Some adult children are stuck due to a rebellious spirit, low self-esteem, or emotional and relational barriers. If any of these describe your child, what can your role be in helping?

WHEN THE NEST ISN'T EMPTYING

1. This chapter discusses the older teen or younger twentysomething who, for a variety of reasons, is living in the family home. What are some positives of an adult child still living at home? What are some negatives? See pages 47–49 for both sides of the coin. Does your experience resonate with these ideas? In what ways? Or how is it different?
2. How does clarifying expectations on both sides make for a more harmonious living experience?
3. Here are five suggested guidelines for parents and children sharing a home:
 - Maintain open communication
 - Balance freedom and responsibility
 - Honor your moral values
 - Consider your own physical and mental health
 - Set time limits and goals

Work through each of these with your own circumstances in mind. Where are changes needed? What steps can you take to implement these?

CHAPTER 3 CONTINUED

4. What are some common factors for tension in the home (pp. 58–59)? What practical suggestions are given for dealing with arguments?

5. Anger is an emotion all of us feel at some time (Gary Chapman's *Anger: Taming a Powerful Emotion* is a fine resource). How does the way we as parents manage our anger affect our children? How can a positive way of managing our anger help our children mature? On the flip side, how can mismanaging our anger influence our children?

Some techniques for managing anger are presented on pages 63–65. What are they? Which can you try? How might “good arise from a bad scene”?

WHEN YOUR CHILD MOVES BACK HOME

1. The previous chapter was about children who were still in the family home. This chapter covers reasons why an adult child might move back home.

Sometimes adults return home for financial and practical reasons such as Nick and Noelle. Do you have a Nick or Noelle in your family? How are you handling these scenarios?

Other times children return for emotional reasons, such as Stephanie (p. 72). Do you have a Stephanie in your home? What are some ideas given for you to help?

2. What are some upsides of having a child return to the home? What are some results for having a planner in the home? A struggler (pp. 75–77)? What are some of the positives of having the returner in your home? How is an agreement between the returner and parents helpful? For example, an agreement that specifies a time limit, financial obligations, goals, privacy.
3. Some returners, such as Darnell and Molly's daughter Beth, bring their children. They made a list together of areas they needed to deal with. What was on that list? What list can you make with your returner who brings children?

CHAPTER 4 CONTINUED

4. Sometimes things don't work out when an adult child returns home. What are possible factors when this happens? How important is parental unity? See the sidebar on page 84. How can it be loving to ask the child to leave?

5. You might never have considered seeing a counselor for family problems. How can a trained counselor be helpful? Would you be open to seeking counseling when needed?

WHEN WELL-MEANING ISN'T ENOUGH

In this chapter, Dr. Chapman explores some of the most common hurdles our young adult children might have toward success and offers guidance to help you bring your children to independence.

1. DEPRESSION

What are some causes of depression? What are some of its symptoms? Why can depression in a young adult be serious? Why might it be hard to identify? What are some of the dos and don'ts of addressing depression? Is your adult child exhibiting signs of depression? What steps can you take to help?

2. PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

How would you describe passive-aggressive behavior? How is it connected to anger? What are some signs of this behavior? Does the story of Joel in this chapter resonate in any way with your adult child? How can you help your child?

CHAPTER 5 CONTINUED

3. SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Parents will understandably be alarmed to realize their adult child has a problem with substance abuse. In what ways are recreational drugs more potent than they once were? How can stress be a factor in using them? If your child is abusing drugs or alcohol, what are some helpful ways to approach him or her (e.g., p. 105)? Dr. Chapman says, “This is the best advice I can give: seek counsel from a qualified person on what steps you should take.” What are some programs and/or counseling that are available in your area?

4. ATTENTION-DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

Does Kathleen (p. 107) remind you of your adult child? In what way(s)? What are some typical behaviors exhibited by persons with ADHD? What are some practical ways to help your adult child focus (p. 110)? How can you implement these in your home, and what others might you try?

In the final paragraph of this chapter, page 110, Dr. Chapman reminds the reader that the issues covered here often involve the need for professional help. Is that your situation? Are you open to seeking help from professionals? If so, what steps will you take?

CARING FOR YOURSELF

1. "Someone has said that when children are little, they step all over your feet, and when they are older, they step all over your heart." Do you find this amusing adage to have a grain of truth? What are some scenarios described in this chapter you relate to?
2. How is setting boundaries with your adult children vital to your own physical and emotional well-being? This is described as maintaining "the balance between self-preservation and self-sacrifice" (p. 117). How are you doing this in your particular circumstances?
3. What are your needs in these areas: physical, emotional, spiritual/need for significance? How are you caring for yourself in each area? Is it selfish to think of your own needs?

CHAPTER 6 CONTINUED

-
-
-
4. "For many who did not grow up in a religious tradition, a crisis in the life of one of our adult children or in their own lives often will awaken the reality of their need for spiritual help" (p. 120). Has this been your experience? What happened?
5. What steps will you take today for self-care?

LIFESTYLE ISSUES

1. If your adult child is cohabitating with a partner rather than getting married, how important is keeping the lines of communication open? What could be negative results for not doing so? What positives might result? If this arrangement is against your moral beliefs, what are some helpful and not-so-helpful ways to address it with your adult child?
2. Our culture's mores concerning homosexuality have changed remarkably quickly. How might a parent react to discover their child is same-sex attracted? How is the topic of orientation versus lifestyle addressed? If your child has revealed he or she is same-sex attracted, are you able to "look beyond sexual orientation and love [your] son or daughter as a person" (p. 136)? If not, or if not yet, are you willing to try? What are some of the practical matters addressed on pages 136–138? Have you dealt with any of these scenarios? What could you say or do to help another parent who's struggling with having a same-sex-attracted child?
3. Gender is another hot-button issue that affects many families. What is gender dysphoria? What is rapid onset gender dysphoria? When it's someone in your family who is undergoing these struggles, the discussion is no longer theoretical or "other people." Is "end of discussion" a helpful response? Why or why not? Dr. Chapman advises a parent whose child or grandchild is experiencing gender dysphoria or transgenderism to get counseling, "for your own mental and emotional health" (p. 141). If this is your need, are you ready to take the next steps?

CHAPTER 7 CONTINUED

4. For religious parents who tried to bring up their children to embrace similar beliefs, it is painful when they don't. What hope do you as parents have from the anecdotes presented in this section (pp. 142–146)? In your situation, in what ways can you keep the lines of communication open, showing love and respect for your adult child's religious choices?

5. Most people can enjoy interactive video games as a hobby without it affecting their lifestyle, but for some, it becomes consuming. Is this the case with your adult child? What steps are presented in this chapter (pp. 147–152) that can help you help your child break free?

6. When might your adult child need financial help? When and how is it okay to give or loan money? What kinds of boundaries should be set either with money or favors (e.g., childcare) so resentment doesn't set in? Should you treat all your adult children equally in these matters? Why and/or why not? When is helping actually hurting? Do you need to make changes in your dealings with your adult children in these areas?

BECOMING AN IN-LAW AND A GRANDPARENT

1. Deanne listened as her son Cole shared some problems in his marriage. How was her reaction wise? What would have been an unwise reaction? Why is it important to wait to give advice until asked?
2. What should our goals be when our son or daughter gets married? Think of your relationships with your own child, the new spouse, and the spouse's parents. Do you need to make any corrections to any of these relationships?
3. In what ways is it important to remember your grandchildren are not your children? That is, when might you be tempted to overstep the authority of their parents?

CHAPTER 8 CONTINUED

4. How is listening part of grandparenting? How important is being aware of your grandchildren's interests? What are some things you can do with your grandchildren if you're in close proximity? What ideas are given to stay close to grandchildren when you live physically far apart (p. 172)? Add your own.

5. Are your adult children divorced? How can you support your grandchildren even as you're grieving with your adult child? If they have remarried, you might now have step-grandchildren. What practical steps can you take to develop a bond with the new children? Are you actually raising your grandchildren? What kind of support do you need? Where can you ask for help?

BECOMING AN IN-LAW AND A GRANDPARENT

1. Part of self-care (discussed in chapter 6) is to “resolve issues that have the power to drag us down and plague us for years” (p. 183). Sometimes parenting mistakes or parental guilt can contribute to our own feelings of depression, loneliness, discouragement, or unworthiness. Do you have unresolved issues?
2. What was James’s story, beginning on page 184? What hurts and dynamics needed to be dealt with? Is there someone in your life—perhaps your own parent—you have issues with? Can these be articulated with the person? If not, can you write a letter? You might even compose a letter if the person(s) you have an issue with is deceased and then release your feelings and the matter to God.
3. What if you’re the recipient of such a letter or a confrontation from your own adult child? What are some appropriate responses? What reactions could be harmful? Dr. Chapman reminds parents that adult children are responsible for their own feelings and responses and that in most cases, parents love their children and did their best with the resources they had during child raising (p. 189). Does this helpful insight make sense to you? In what way(s)?

CHAPTER 9 CONTINUED

4. Sometimes your own parent does not acknowledge their own failure or even wrongdoing. Or you might be confronted by your adult child about something that you don't consider a failure or wrongdoing on your part. How does forgiveness enter into such a scenario (pp. 189–90)? Is this your situation? What healing steps can you take?

5. How is forgiveness the higher road? How can a lack of forgiveness turn to bitterness? What are benefits of forgiveness? How is a healthy, positive outlook important? What can you do today to move toward having a balanced, healthy view of life?

YOUR LEGACY

1. There are many types of legacies we can and will leave to our children. One is material. What are some scenarios presented with regard to finances and other material goods (pp. 196–99)? Are any of these pertinent to your family's situation? Why is it important to address and keep refreshing these issues "before you are not there to indicate your wishes"? What steps will you take to begin this process?
2. Some families pass along a poor emotional legacy, as Doyme experienced (pp. 201–03) or a morally lacking legacy (pp. 203–05). What can result from these types of growing-up experiences? Can healing occur? Can the course be reversed even if your children are grown?
3. While morality involves right and wrong, spirituality has to do with our beliefs about the unseen, nonmaterial world. What was your spiritual legacy? What spiritual legacy have you tried to pass along to your children? What encouragement is given here for your adult children who have drifted away from the faith they were brought up with?

CHAPTER 10 CONTINUED

4. The chapter also discusses legacies of emotions, memories, character, integrity, and stability. Have you considered these as part of what you're leaving your adult children? What are some positives in these areas you have established?
5. "Prayer assumes the existence of a personal and infinite God who cares deeply about His creatures and who has invited them to reciprocate His love" (p. 214). Do you believe this? Is prayer part of your life? If not, it's never too late to start!

WHAT CAN I DO WHEN . . .

The final chapter briefly answers some questions that were not covered in this book. Which of these questions do you relate to? Do you have other questions about relating to adult children?

Dr. Gary Chapman has written many books that millions have found helpful in their personal relationships. In addition to ***Your New Life with Adult Children***, you will benefit from **The 5 Love Languages series**, ***Anger. Taming a Powerful Emotion***, ***The 5 Apology Languages***, and many more. Visit moodypublishers.com.

SUGGESTIONS FOR LEADING A SMALL GROUP

- Plan—decide when to meet, where, how long each session will be, and for how long your group will meet: open-ended? six weeks? (It might make a difference to those who consider joining.)
- Be flexible in your discussion. Do not feel you need to answer or even talk about every part of every question.
- Create a safe environment so participants will know anything personal they might share will remain in the group.
- Encourage participation by asking questions: “Anyone want to add to that?” “Does anyone else have a different idea?”
- Without taking too much time away from the meeting’s topic, you might solicit follow-up from the previous session. “Has anyone tried . . . ? How did it go?”
- Make sure participants feel listened to; use eye contact, paraphrase, echo, restate what they say. “If I understand you correctly, you’re saying . . .”
- Try **why** or **how** questions to follow up.
- Stay on track, but if the discussion goes a different way than you expected but is still on topic and helpful, let it go. However, you don’t want the discussion to get way off the subject you’ve come to discuss!
- Don’t be afraid of silence while people are thinking; don’t jump in too quickly just to fill it.
- If you have a dominating person who feels he or she must answer every question, try calling on someone else (carefully—not everyone is comfortable with this); or go around the circle and ask everyone for a response; or say, “Thanks, John, that’s interesting; can you hold that thought and we’ll get back to you?”
- Disagreement isn’t something to avoid. Affirm participants’ ideas and experiences.
- Every honest response has value.
- Be a facilitator, not a teacher. If appropriate for your group, consider taking turns leading the discussion.
- Follow up when someone misses the session.
- Consider a break from the format and just have dinner together.