

SESSION 1: **YOU'RE FIRED! (SO BE QUIET)**

► **GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE**

We created this guide to help you discuss Jim's content in a group setting. Discussion is a great way to personalize his material for your parenting. To help you get the most out of this guide, here are a few tips to keep in mind.

FOR THE FACILITATOR/LEADER:

BE PREPARED. As the discussion facilitator, you should spend a few moments preparing for your group's time together. Use this time to read the chapter(s) in the book, watch the video, think through the principles, and read the discussion questions. Consider using the following schedule (for a 60-minute session). Take more time if you have some to spare.

- Hang out and reconnect—or eat a meal together!
15-20 minutes
- Watch the video.
5-10 minutes
- Discuss as a group.
15-30 minutes

BE CHOOSY. We've provided a lot of questions—probably too many for your group to discuss in one meeting. The questions ought to be a launchpad for conversation, so pick the questions that best fit your group. Don't feel any pressure to "get through" all of them; the goal for your time together is not to answer every question. If you come up with your own questions, that's great too!

FOR EVERYONE IN THE GROUP:

BE RISKY. The best discussions are open and honest, and sometimes this means taking a risk by sharing something personal. Even though this isn't easy, it's a good thing! Authenticity is always the best teacher.

BE SAFE. If a group isn't safe, no one will take a risk and share something personal. Safe groups are accepting of others even when there is disagreement. Safe groups also don't try to fix one another. Most of the time, a person is not looking for a solution; they just need their feelings validated.

Finally, confidentiality is essential. What's shared in the group stays in the group!

BE CONSISTENT. Make a commitment to meet every week. Life is busy for everyone, but making a weekly meeting a priority will have the greatest impact.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

PRINCIPLE ONE: YOUR ROLE AS THE PARENT MUST CHANGE.

- Take two minutes to describe your current relationship with your adult child(ren).
- In which aspects of parenting do you think you might need to be fired? What new roles do you need to implement? Roles are assumed, not implemented. Be as specific as you can and provide examples.
- After investing two decades of your life in day-to-day parenting, in what ways are you surprised by your new role?
- Jim said the new parenting role acts more like a consultant. In other words, your adult child needs to be making the most of their day-to-day decisions. What does that mean to you? What areas of your parenting relationship might have to change (if any) if you were more of a “consultant”? How might a “consultant approach” to parenting adult kids be helpful?
- How can you encourage your child’s attempts at adulting? Discuss wording that might be helpful.
- There is often a grieving period after a relationship moves from adult/child to adult/adult. Jim said, “Letting go of your children must be counted as a necessary loss.” Make a list of the things you are going to miss.
- Adult children make great additions to the “big people” table. They are clever, insightful, and energetic—so have fun! What do you enjoy doing with your grown kids? What steps could you take to have more serious fun with your adult child? How could you see this benefiting the relationship?
- While adjusting to a new parenting role, what are you doing to invest in your own emotional, physical, and spiritual health? What steps could you take to work on these areas of your life?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FROM THE BOOK

As your kids transition to adulthood, what makes it difficult for you to change your job description and role as a parent?

Many parents find it challenging to be caring without enabling. Using your relationship with your children as a reference, how would you describe the difference between the two? What have you done that is caring? What, if anything, have you done that is enabling?

Many parents put all their emotional, physical, and spiritual energy into their kids and find themselves depleted. How would you describe your situation in this regard? Are you investing more in your kids than you are in yourself? What self-care practices could you implement to bring your life into a healthier balance?

What is your response to this quote from Judith Viorst? “Letting our children go, and letting our dreams for our children go, must be counted among our necessary losses?”

How would you describe the legacy you hope to leave your children?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

PRINCIPLE TWO: UNSOLICITED ADVICE IS USUALLY TAKEN AS CRITICISM.

- Describe a time when you tried to give your child(ren) advice and they “turned” on you.
- Offering unsolicited advice can make it seem like you are stepping into your old pattern of parenting. What safeguards can you put in place to prevent offering unsolicited advice?
- Does confessing to your kids, “Every time I throw my opinion around, I realize I put a wedge between us—and I’m sorry,” come easy to you? Why or why not?
- When you were a young adult, how did you respond to unsolicited advice? Why does it feel like it’s sometimes easier to give your kids advice rather than grace?
- Does Ruth Graham’s story remind you of a time your own parents extended grace to you (or didn’t extend grace to you)? Share your experience. What did their actions communicate to you at the time?
- Summarize in your own words what you think it might mean for you to “Keep Your Mouth Shut and the Welcome Mat Out.”

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FROM THE BOOK

Do you agree or disagree with this chapter’s principle that unsolicited advice is usually taken as criticism? Share the reasons for your response.

If you have practiced “keeping your mouth shut and the welcome mat out,” what have you found most challenging about it?

Can you think of times in your own life that experience has been a better teacher than advice? How have you used (or struggled to use) this principle in relation to your adult child? What happened as a result?

Briefly describe a time you felt your adult child was making a poor choice. How did you respond? Looking back, would you say your response offered respect to your adult child? What might you do differently now?

A healthy parent-to-child relationship moves from control to mentoring during the young adult years. Where are you in this transition? Are you closer to control or closer to mentoring? What concerns do you have about moving from control to mentoring?

SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING

This section is for those who would like to think about the content from a Christian point of view.

A PRAYER OF RELINQUISHMENT

God, I relinquish my children to your care and watchfulness. Give me the courage to let go as they move—sometimes ever so slowly—toward responsible adulthood. Grant me discernment to know when to carefully intervene and the restraint to do so only when absolutely necessary. I acknowledge that this is one of the hardest transitions I have ever had to make and that I need your guidance and insight. In all things, help me to love my children as you love them—lavishly and with grace. Amen.

“A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person’s strength” (Proverbs 17:22).

- How does this proverb relate to dealing with a sense of loss of the day-to-day parenting of your adult child? What can you do as a parent to bring more fun and cheerfulness into your new relationship with your adult child?

“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted” (Psalm 3:18 NLT).

- If you find yourself feeling a sense of loss or even a broken heart, what would spending more time with God look like during this season?

“Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body” (Proverbs 16:23-24).

- When attempting to get their point across, why might some parents think talking in harsh tones is more effective than speaking kindly?
- Is there ever a time when using a harsh word is appropriate or necessary?

“And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns” (Philippians 1:6 NLT).

- How does this Scripture relate to your changing role as a parent?