

Notes to Leader for Ritual L27 -- A Child Leaving Home

Purpose

This optional life-event session is for use when a group member is saying good-bye to a child who is leaving home for college, the military, marriage, his or her own apartment, etc. This can be a traumatic and bittersweet time in the lives of parents, who may experience grief and mourning as well as pride in their child's independence. This session aims to acknowledge those feelings and to help the parent affirm that this is the natural order of things, that life does go on and that the group is there in support.

Make copies of the Order of Worship for this ritual and keep them in your notebook so they can be used when the need arises. Note: Unlike most of the optional Life Rituals, this one requires a *full* 8 ½ x 11 sheet folded in the middle.

Before Using This Session

Check with the group member beforehand to find out whether this session would be welcome now or at another time.

Timing

This 10- to 15-minute session may be used either before or after the regularly scheduled Small Group Ministry worship. If a child's leaving home comes up in the check-in, perhaps the leader could ask the member and the group if they wish to devote part of the gathering to this ritual.

Preliminaries:

Choose someone to read the opening poem. Stress that sharing is optional and only for the member who has a major problem with a child.

Resources

Though some of the books listed below are specific to kids leaving for college or to "empty nest" parents whose last child is gone, most of them offer advice on dealing with the emotions generated when a child leaves home for any reason.

- *133 Ways to Avoid Going Cuckoo When the Kids Fly the Nest: A Parent's Guide for Surviving Empty Nest Syndrome* by Lauren Schaffer & Sandy Fleischl Wasserman.
- *And Suddenly They're Gone: What Parents Need to Know About the Empty Nest* by Patricia S. Olson.
- *Don't Tell Me What to Do, Just Send Money: The Essential Parenting Guide to the College Years* by Helen E. Johnson, et al.
- *Empty Nest Parenting: Finishing the Job and Reaping the Rewards After Your Child Leaves Home* by Richard M. Eyre & Linda Eyre.
- *Empty Nest, Full Heart: The Journey from Home to College* by Andrea Van Steenhouse & Johanna Parker.
- *The Empty Nest: When Children Leave Home* by Shelley Bovey & Rosa Ainley.
- *How to Survive and Thrive in an Empty Nest: Reclaiming Your Life When Your Children Have Grown* by Robert H. Lauer & Jeanette C. Lauer.
- *Letting Go: A Parents' Guide to Understanding the College Years* by Karen Levin Coburn.
- *When Kids Go to College: A Parent's Guide to Changing Relationships* by Barbara M. Newman & Philip R. Newman.
- *When Your Kid Goes to College: A Parent's Survival Guide* by Carol Barkin.