

GOING FURTHER: RESOURCES

The Empty Nest: Finding Your Place When Your Kids Leave Home
by Celia Dodd

Empty Nest, Full Life: Discovering God's Best for Your Next by Jill Savage

Life in the Empty Nest: Rediscovering the Joy of Purpose, Passion, and Connection by Marci Seither

The Second Half of Marriage by David and Claudia Arp

Parenting Your Adult Child by Gary Chapman and Ross Campbell

Keeping Your Kids Close When They Move Far Away by Karen O'Connor

The Seasons of Parenting by H. Norman Wright

Preparing to Launch by Dennis and Barbara Rainey

Reconnecting: Moving Forward Together After the Kids Are Grown
by Greg and Erin Smalley



NAVIGATING THE EMPTY NEST

Launching children into adulthood is one of the most significant milestones in a parent's life. It marks the culmination of years of guidance, care, and prayer. Yet, the transition can evoke a wide range of emotions from relief and pride to loneliness and uncertainty. Whether a parent is preparing for, just entering, or well into the empty nest season, this is a pivotal time to rediscover purpose, relationships, and joys in this new phase of life.

STEP ONE: REDISCOVER YOUR MISSION

For years, much of a parent's focus has been on raising children, but God's purpose for their life doesn't end when the children leave home. The skills they've developed, patience, wisdom, and a servant's heart, can now be redirected to broader ministry and service.

Paul reminds us of the connection between managing a household and serving the kingdom: "If someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?" (1 Timothy 3:5). This season provides parents with the time and freedom to pour into others, especially younger families who are just beginning their parenting journey.

Many couples are tempted to use the empty nest years solely for personal enjoyment, spending time and money on themselves. While rest and recreation are good gifts, we must remember our higher calling. Jesus said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6:19–20). Investing in the kingdom through mentoring, discipleship, or volunteering is a way to steward this season for God's glory.



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STEP TWO: KEEP YOUR MARRIAGE CENTRAL

Parenting often demands significant focus and energy, but it should never take precedence over marriage. Sadly, many couples enter the empty nest years feeling like strangers because they placed their children at the center of their lives instead of maintaining their bond as husband and wife.

God's design is for marriage to be a lifelong covenant and the foundation of the family. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). While parenting is a temporary season, marriage is meant to last a lifetime.

Now is the time to rediscover each other. Proverbs encourages couples to invest in their marriages: "Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth" (Proverbs 5:18). Couples can spend time reconnecting, rediscovering shared interests, and dreaming about their future together. This season offers the chance to renew love and build a stronger bond, reflecting Christ's love for the church.

If a marriage has faced struggles or neglect, the empty nest years can also be a time of healing and restoration. "Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). Couples are called to put their marriage first and cultivate a relationship that honors God.

STEP THREE: REDISCOVER YOUR CHILDREN

Parenting doesn't end when children leave home, but it changes significantly. The authority and control a parent once held give way to influence and relationship. The role shifts from daily direction to sideline coaching, offering wisdom when invited and cheering children on as they navigate their own lives.

This season requires trust in God's continued work in their lives. "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). The values and lessons parents have instilled will bear fruit in their own time.

Psalms 78 reminds us of the generational impact of faith: "We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done" (Psalm 78:4). As parents watch their children begin to make decisions, pursue careers, and build families, they can take joy in seeing God's plan unfold in their lives.

This new phase also brings the opportunity for adult-to-adult friendships with children, built on mutual respect and shared experiences. While par-

ents may no longer guide them directly, ongoing presence and love can be a steady encouragement as children build their own futures.

STEP FOUR: INVEST IN THE KINGDOM

The empty nest years provide unique opportunities for kingdom work. With fewer daily parenting responsibilities, empty nesters have the chance to mentor younger couples and families who are where they once were. Sharing wisdom, successes, and even failures helps others make God-honoring decisions in their parenting and marriages.

Paul encouraged older believers to invest in the next generation: "Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior... and so train the young women to love their husbands and children" (Titus 2:3-4). This principle applies to men as well, as they model leadership and integrity for younger men.

Don't let this season be defined solely by personal pursuits. While enjoying travel or hobbies is not wrong, balance these with intentional investments in eternity. Jesus reminds us: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21).

FINAL ENCOURAGEMENT

The empty nest is not an end but a new beginning. It is a time to rediscover purpose, deepen relationships, and serve God in fresh ways. Parents can trust that He has prepared this season for them with just as much intention as He prepared them for parenting. "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

Couples and parents can embrace this chapter with faith and anticipation, knowing that God's plans for them are good. "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11). May this season be filled with renewed joy, meaningful service, and the continued unfolding of God's purpose for each life.