

**EMPTY NEST**

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Reaching the milestone of raising and launching your children can lead to surprising emotions. One day you might feel relieved to catch your breath after such an intense marathon and then the next day you miss the busyness and fullness of having the kids around. Whether you are approaching, just hitting or deep into the empty nest season you are likely experiencing a range of feelings that can leave you asking yourself “What next?”

## **REDISCOVER YOUR MISSION**

Psalm 90 gives us a reminder of the passage of time, and a wise prayer for the Lord to “teach us to number our days aright” and to “establish the work of our hands.” A major segment of your life up to this point has been committed to serving and guiding your children. That faithful and daily focus on individuals within your home has prepared you for broader service. In I Timothy 3:5 Paul asks the question, “If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?” You have managed your family and have learned a couple of things about how to care for God’s church—how to love, forgive, guide, lead and encourage. This experience, as well as the additional time and resources that often come with an empty nest, can equip you for a whole new world of service and influence.

## **REDISCOVER YOUR MARRIAGE**

You may feel like the tsunami of kids that swept in and out has left you needing to rediscover the person to whom you said “I do” so long ago. Proverbs 5:18-19 says, “May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.” After this intense stretch of parenting, how can you find fresh ways to rejoice in the marriage of your youth and to “be ever captivated” by your spouse? Rediscover the joy of quiet time together, dating and getting to know each other all over again.

## **REDISCOVER YOUR CHILDREN**

During earlier parenting stages, you had some fairly clear lines of authority and control, especially when it came to your house rules. Those lines blur as your children become independent. Now is the time when your influence is built upon strong relationship rather than direct control. Your efforts will focus on coaching your children into self-sufficiency and into pursuing marriage and building families of their own. This season becomes more “sideline coaching” rather than step-by-step direction. But this season also gives you a vantage point to see the time and effort you’ve invested into your children, watching them discover God’s plan for their lives.

## **RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

**Half Time** by Bob Buford

**Second Half of Marriage** by David and Claudia Arp