



The Empty Nest Years

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Adapted by *Greenville Oaks Church of Christ*

The kids are grown and gone. Now what?

Achieving the long-term goal of raising and launching a child is one of those milestones in life that can lead to surprising emotions. One day you might feel relieved to catch your breath after such an intense marathon, and the next day you miss the busyness—especially the ever-present relationships that went with it. Fortunately, the empty nest years can be a great time to take steps toward rediscovery in your life.

STEP ONE: Rediscover Your Mission

A major segment of your life up to this point has been committed to serving and guiding your children. But now that your children are more self-sufficient, you can take what you learned in the family setting and translate that into broader service in the community.

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?* Another way to view that passage is that if you manage your family, you have probably learned a great deal about how to care for God's church—how to love, forgive, guide, lead and encourage.

Such characteristics can equip you for a whole new world of opportunities to fulfill your mission during this exciting season of life. You have much to offer; and God can use you in amazing ways for service to the kingdom.

STEP TWO: Rediscover Your Marriage

Husbands and wives who raise children together can easily become disconnected over time. Once the kids leave home, you may need 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.* How can you find fresh ways to rejoice in the marriage of your youth and to "be ever captivated" by your spouse?

You may just need to reintroduce yourself ("Hi, I'm that guy who asked you out a few decades ago," or "I'm that girl you met on the mission trip") and start rediscovering some of your earlier passions and dreams.

STEP THREE: Rediscover Your Children

Your relationship with your children should change as they step into adulthood. Instead of discipline and more involved forms of parenting, your efforts will focus on coaching your children into self-sufficiency and into pursuing career, marriage, and families of their own.

This season requires a lot of trust because "sideline coaching" is all you can offer rather than step-by-step direction. Now is the time when your influence is built upon strong relationship rather than



direct control. But this season also gives you a vantage point to see the time and effort you've invested into your children in a different light—especially as they begin to take ownership of the values you've tried to instill (Psalm 78:3-7) and watch them discover God's plan for their lives.

GOING FURTHER - Resources

Recommended Books:

Available for checkout at the Faith@Home Center or for purchase online.

Halftime: Moving from Success to Significance (by Bob Buford) discusses how reaching midlife is an opportunity to propel your life on a new course away from mere success to true significance—and the best years of your life.

Second Half of Marriage (by David and Claudia Arp) addresses eight challenges of the empty-nest years.

GOING FURTHER – Church Support

Professional Christian Counseling

Greenville Oaks Church of Christ offers various resources for Christ-centered professional counseling (including premarital counseling). For more information, please call the church office at 972-727-2359 or email FaithatHome@greenvilleoaks.org.