FOLLOW THEIR LEAD

Chapter 1 • Based on *Finding Joy in the Empty Nest* by Jim Burns

THE ARC OF THIS SESSION
From **mourning the role you've lost** → to **embracing the new thing God is doing in your second half.**

In One Paragraph

Most parents don't see the empty nest coming until the house goes quiet. For two decades you were the supervisor — schedules, meals, rides, the endless noise of a full home — and then, almost overnight, you become a spectator. The stillness can feel less like peace and more like aimlessness: Who am I now, and what do I do with the rest of my life? Jim Burns opens Finding Joy in the Empty Nest with a hopeful reframe: this is not only a loss to grieve but a doorway to walk through. As your children's lives fill up with fresh experiences, you're invited to follow their lead — to close the chapter well, choose your attitude, and step into a second half marked by renewed purpose and passion. The nest is emptier. Your calling is not.

Anchor Scriptures

"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?"
Isaiah 43:18–19 (NIV)

"Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."
Philippians 3:13–14 (NIV)

"They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green."
Psalm 92:14 (NIV)

Four Core Shifts

From	To
Supervisor of your child's daily life	Spectator who cheers from the sidelines
A too-quiet house that feels aimless	Quiet space you invest in new purpose
"Who am I now?" identity loss	A God-given fresh start and calling
Waiting for life to feel normal again	Following their lead into fresh experiences

Key Language You'll Hear Jim Use

"Follow their lead." As your kids' lives fill with fresh experiences, let yours fill too.

"Supervisor to spectator." Erma Bombeck's phrase for the role shift at the heart of the ache.

"Reboot and reconnect." The simple, deliberate steps that restart your second half.

"The second half." Like a game, the biggest wins can still come in the later stages.

"The 10/90 rule." Chuck Swindoll: life is 10% what happens and 90% how you respond.

The Stillness and the Reboot

A picture of what the empty nest can pull you toward — and the small, intentional moves that turn the quiet into a fresh start.

The Stillness (Watch For)	The Reboot (Do This)
Aimlessness when the noise finally stops	Name the loss, then set one new goal
"The best years are behind me"	Choose the 90% — your attitude
Isolation in a house that's gone silent	Enhance friendships; take a social risk
Letting the marriage drift unattended	Reboot and reconnect — a date, a shared project

Story Snapshot: The Empty Chair

The first Sunday after their youngest left for college, Dave and Renee Okafor came home from church to a silence neither of them knew what to do with. For nine years, the kitchen table had been the loudest place in the house. Now there was one empty chair too many, and they ate without saying much. Renee finally named it: "It feels like part of us just moved out, too." They didn't fix it with a big plan. They picked one small thing — a Saturday-morning walk, no phones — and kept it. A month in, Dave signed up for the woodworking class he'd talked about for a decade; Renee called an old friend she'd let drift. Nothing about the empty chair changed. But the house slowly stopped feeling like an ending and started feeling like a beginning. That's following their lead.

Why This Session Matters

Most parents arrive at the empty nest with no ceremony to mark it — a long marathon that simply ends without a finish line. The danger isn't the quiet itself; it's mistaking the quiet for the end of your usefulness. Session 1 is the invitation to see it differently while the transition is fresh: to grieve honestly, then to follow your children's lead into a season of fresh experiences of your own. The same departure that empties the house can open the space for purpose, passion, and a second half worth living. The work is small and simple. The stakes — your joy, your marriage, your sense of calling — are not.

> Your nest is quieter. Your story isn't finished. Follow their lead — and step into the new thing God is doing.