FOLLOW THEIR LEAD

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

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

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)

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed for small groups walking through the Finding Joy in the Empty Nest video series together. Each session includes Scripture for reflection, stories and prompts that illustrate the chapter's principles, and questions for group conversation.

For best results: Read the corresponding chapter of the book, then watch the Session 1 video together. Open your Bibles. Work through this guide using the group discussion questions, close with the prayer, and choose one practice to try this week.

Each session contains five parts. Each section is clearly marked to help guide the leader.

Opening Comments for Facilitator/Leader

Video

Group Discussion Questions

Practical Activity Assignment

Closing Prayer

Opening Comments for Facilitator/Leader (10-15 Minutes)

If you're here, the homes in your group are probably quieter than they used to be. The empty nest is a strange kind of loss — nobody died, nothing went wrong, and yet something real is gone. For years your people were supervisors; now they're spectators, and many of them are quietly asking, "Who am I now, and what do I do with the rest of my life?" Session 1 begins with a promise: this is not the end of the story. It can be the start of the best part.

Before you dive in, take a moment to settle the group and invite God into this time.

Prayer

Let's start with one honest sentence about where your heart is in this season.

To begin:

- On a scale of 1 to 5, how full does your nest feel right now — and how hopeful do you feel about what's next? (It's okay for those to be very different numbers.)

Scripture Foundation

Before we talk about what to do, we start with what is true. These three passages anchor everything in Session 1. Read each one slowly — out loud if you can.

> *"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)
>
> God doesn't ask you to pretend the old season didn't matter. He asks you to stop living there — because He is already starting something new.

> *"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)
>
> Paul's secret isn't forgetting that the past happened. It's refusing to let it set the direction. The straining is forward.

> *"They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green."*
> Psalm 92:14 (NIV)
>
> The empty nest is not the end of your fruitfulness. Scripture says the later years can be the freshest, greenest ones yet.

Reflect Questions

- Which of these three verses speaks most directly to where you are right now? Why that one?
- Jim says it's time to "reboot and reconnect." What would it look like to intentionally open your heart this week to the new thing God is doing?

Video (15-20 Minutes)

Play Session 1 Video

Group Discussion Questions (30 Minutes)

These questions are designed for group conversation. Take your time. Listen more than you speak. Remember that everyone in the room is carrying something.

1. Go around the circle: when you hear "reboot, reconnect, and leave a legacy," does it land as energizing or overwhelming? Why?
2. The empty nest is change and loss at the same time. Where do you feel that tension most right now?
3. Erma Bombeck described going from "supervisor" to "spectator." Where has that shift hit you hardest?
4. Did anyone take the Empty Nest Syndrome Quiz? Without sharing numbers unless you want to — which statement was the most difficult one?
5. Jim talks about the "second half" and Swindoll's 10/90 rule. What is one attitude about this season you'd like to change?
6. Name it out loud: one fresh experience or new goal you'll pursue before we meet again. Let the group hold you to it.

Practical Activity Assignment (5 Minutes)

THIS WEEK: A PRACTICE TO TRY
Take One Fresh Step

1. Take the quiz. Sit down with the Empty Nest Syndrome Quiz in the Personal Study Guide this week and score it honestly. Notice which statement hits hardest — that's your starting point.
2. Pick one reboot. Choose a single small fresh experience — a class, a call to an old friend, a standing date night, a project you've shelved. Small beats dramatic. Put it on the calendar.
3. Name one new goal. Write down one goal for your second half — physical, relational, spiritual, or creative — and tell one person. Saying it out loud is how it starts.

Closing Prayer & Sending

God of new things, we bring You this quiet season and all we feel in it — the loss, the questions, the hope we're reaching for. Thank You that the empty nest is not the end of our fruitfulness. Open our eyes to the new thing You are doing, and help each of us take one fresh step toward it this week. Make our later years the freshest and greenest yet. Amen.