HAND THEM THE PASSPORT

Chapter 2 • Based on *Finding Joy in the Empty Nest* by Jim Burns

THE ARC OF THIS SESSION
From **holding on to control of your adult child's life** → to **handing over the passport to adulthood and becoming a mentor.**

In One Paragraph

Somewhere around the empty nest, the job description changes — and nobody hands you the new one. For two decades you were the manager: schedules, money, rescues, advice. Now your child is an adult, and the role that served them at twelve quietly sabotages them at twenty-five. Session 2 names the goal of this whole stretch of parenting in three words: responsible adulthood. Getting there means handing your child what Jim calls the "passport to adulthood" — trusting them to carry their own load, holding back the advice that lands as criticism, loving them across the choices you'd make differently, and bracing wisely for the "boomerang" if they move back home. You're not being demoted. You're being promoted — from manager to mentor.

Anchor Scriptures

"That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh."
Genesis 2:24 (NIV)

"For each one should carry their own load."
Galatians 6:5 (NIV)

"A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense."
Proverbs 19:11 (NIV)

Four Core Shifts

From	To
Manager of your child's daily life	Mentor your adult child chooses to come to
Fixing every problem, paying every bill	Letting them carry their own load
Unsolicited advice (heard as criticism)	Questions — and a tongue you can bite
Control when values clash	Love, boundaries, and natural consequences

Key Language You'll Hear Jim Use

- **"Passport to adulthood."** Handing over the acknowledgment that your child is now in charge of their own life.
- **"You're fired."** Jim's blunt way of saying your old parenting role has ended — on purpose.
- **"Experience is a better teacher than advice."** Mistakes, not lectures, are how adults learn.
- **"Enabling vs. supporting."** Help for a specific good reason builds; open-ended rescue creates failure to launch.
- **"The boomerang."** The adult child who moves back home — workable with clear, written expectations.

Enabling and Supporting

The line between helping and hurting is rarely loud. Here's what to watch for — and the move that turns rescue into real support.

Enabling (Watch For)	Supporting (Do This)
Paying every bill, with no end date	Help for a specific reason, with a finish line
Making their appointments and calls	Let them carry their own load
Unsolicited advice and verdicts	Ask questions; bite your tongue
A boomerang move-in with no ground rules	A written agreement before they move in

Story Snapshot: The Unmade Phone Call

When her son's rent came up short again, Diane's hand was already on the checkbook. This time she set it down. "I love you, and I know you'll figure it out," she said — then sat through three days of silence that felt like failure. Then he called back: he'd worked it out himself, and sounded almost surprised he could. She hadn't stopped loving him. She'd just stopped carrying what was his to carry.

Why This Session Matters

Most parents don't cling because they're controlling; they cling because they love, and because letting go feels like loss. But the goal of all those years was never a child who needs you forever — it was a responsible adult who can stand on their own. Session 2 reframes the empty nest as a promotion: from the exhausting work of managing a life to the quieter, deeper work of mentoring one. Hand over the passport, and you don't lose your child. You gain the adult friendship that the next thirty years are built on.

> You're not losing your child. You're trading a manager's clipboard for a mentor's open door. Hand them the passport.