

Are You Surviving or Thriving in Your Empty Nest?

By [Laura Bailey](#) (From Billy Graham Ministries)

With an empty nest, a home's rhythm changes dramatically. This can be jolting for both single parents and married couples, so what's the best way to prepare yourself for the new solitude? First, pray about it. Then, during your child's high school years, seek out or strengthen friendships with others approaching the same transition. Married couples can plan weekly dates to reconnect and strengthen their relationship.

When parents drop off their last child—or only child—at college, life can change dramatically for mom and dad back home.

The house is now eerily quiet. The refrigerator half-empty. The washer motionless. Dinner moves from the kitchen table to dining in front of the TV. And of course, there are tears.

Even with 18 or more years to prepare, the abrupt stillness of an empty nest can hit hard. With parents focused on getting their child settled at college, this sudden hush can catch them off guard.

“It’s a time of great adjustment—even stress for some couples,” Billy Graham once wrote about this life stage. “But with God’s help, it can become one of the most fulfilling times of your life.”

It may take a while to get there, though. There’s a time of mourning the days when family was all together. You miss your child, their friends and possibly even their loud music or bad attitudes.

For single parents, the solitude can be isolating. Stay-at-home moms or dads may feel they’ve lost their purpose. Yet, for others, it’s a time to celebrate newfound freedom.

>> [Read more Biblical wisdom on having an empty nest.](#)

Surviving the Transition

It’s natural to miss your child, but there are ways to care for them and you as well. Here are some ideas:

- [Become a prayer warrior for your child](#). Ask God to protect them, that they make wise decisions and quality friends, and that He will avert any anxiety they're feeling.
- Stay connected through text and email. Follow them on social media where you can like their posts but refrain from commenting often. Set up a time for a weekly video call. Sometimes, they'll be busy and won't be available or willing to talk, but that's OK. Email or send letters—students love to get mail.
- Get out of the house. It's not healthy to sit home and brood. Meet with friends also experiencing this lifestyle change, either one-on-one, in a group or with other couples.
- Dive into God's Word. This is an ideal time to find a Bible study.
- Send care packages. Spoil them with their favorite snacks or homemade cookies. This is a win-win; it's good for you and your child.
- Plan to visit your son or daughter at college, if feasible. Go to parents' weekend and attend a football game. Your child still needs family around. Showing you how they can manage on their own and making you proud is important to them.

Ask God 'What's Next?'

In Scripture, Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 3: "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven."

As an empty nester, you've entered a different season and your heart aches for the way it used to be. For example, the feeling of knowing your kids are home safe at bedtime. Instead of viewing this as a sad ending, have you considered it could be a new beginning? [Try turning to God](#) and asking, "What's next?" Your prayer could be simple: "Do a new thing in me, Lord."

>> Billy and Ruth Graham were once empty nesters. [This was Billy Graham's advice on how to move forward.](#)

What are you passionate about? Take a class or even start a small business. This is also the perfect time to renew relationships with old friends.

Be intentional about sharing your faith in everyday conversation. To get more comfortable doing this, [write out your faith story](#). How can you live out the Great Commission since you have more free time?

Find a new purpose by serving others.

>> Volunteer with [Search for Jesus](#), the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association's online ministry. [Read these soul-stirring stories and learn more.](#)

How's Your Marriage?

After years of non-stop school and church activities, sports and running kids around, how's your marriage? Is conversation mostly centered on the kids? Take time to work on your relationship and consider attending a Christian marriage conference. Even couples with good marriages can use a reboot.

It's also important to spend more time together than apart now. If you don't have a lot of common interests, get out of the house more. Explore fun new things such as kayaking, dance lessons or concerts. Get more involved in church, work in your garden and work out.

Have you ever considered becoming surrogate parents? Young people you know may live far from family, and would cherish friendship with an older couple.

Of course, like many do, you can always get a dog.

Bottom line, though—your kids want you to be happy. You've both entered new phases. They're growing as people, and this is your opportunity to do the same. Your children will feel more secure and flourish in their new independence knowing all is well at home.

*Stephen Ministers are especially trained to come alongside you **to listen, care, encourage, and provide emotional and spiritual support during a time of transition.** There are several ways to make arrangements to talk to a Stephen Minister.*

(1) Complete this confidential [Stephen Ministry form](#).

OR

(2) Call directly: Pastor Bob Bohler (706-549-9284) or Stephen Ministry Referrals Coordinator Deb Williams (706-247-9000).