

4 THINGS I WISH I'D NOTICED

Before My Nest Emptied

FOUR RELEASES FOR NOTICING GOD IN A SEASON OF CHANGE

A transition where we can miss God

Few transitions are as significant or emotional as the empty nest. The familiar rhythms change. The pitterpatter of little feet became bigger footsteps, and then one day the house grew quiet. Our identity can become so wrapped up in being a mom that when the daily role changes, it can feel as though part of us has disappeared too.

People may say, "You'll adjust," or, "Now you can do whatever you want." But those words do not answer the deeper question: What might God be doing in this season?

THE QUESTION THAT CHANGES HOW WE SEE

Lord, what are You teaching me?

That question has changed the way I see life. It has become the heartbeat of my ministry and the reason I call myself a Noticer: I want to slow down long enough to recognize God in moments I might otherwise miss. Seasons of transition are places where we can miss Him if we are not careful. The empty nest is not merely something to survive or pass through. It can become a place where God meets us, teaches us, and invites us to notice what He is doing next.

The children may graduate. We do not.

James tells believers to consider trials with joy because testing produces perseverance and maturity. He is not asking us to pretend loneliness, uncertainty, or loss are not real. Then James gives the instruction we especially need when we are asking, Where do I go from here?

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him." - James 1:5

Wisdom does not automatically arrive with an empty nest. The season often produces questions instead: Who am I now? What am I supposed to do? What if no one needs me to be who I have always been?

Wisdom assumes there is a Teacher. For years, you taught your children to obey, trust God, tell the truth, be kind, make wise choices - and even tie their shoes. What if the quiet does not mean the classroom is closed? What if God is simply inviting you to change seats: Daughter, come sit with Me. I have some things I want to teach you.

YOUR SHORT ANSWER TO "WHO AM I NOW?"

Your role may change. Your address and the sounds in your home may change. But your belonging has not changed: "I have called you by name, you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1).

1 Release the Role

You are not losing your child. God may be preparing you for what comes next.

There may come a moment when you see your child through different eyes: not as the little boy or girl who depended upon you, but as a young man or woman. You may feel that realization in your gut. It is not proof that motherhood has ended. It is evidence that motherhood is changing.

Everything you spent years teaching your children - listening, trusting, obeying, surrendering, waiting - God now wants to deepen in you. He never asks us to release something without offering us something in return. Your role as mom may change, but your identity as a daughter of the King never does.

When Jesus said to seek first God's kingdom and righteousness, He was teaching His followers not to be consumed by questions of provision such as food and clothing. The broader ordering of the heart matters here too. If you have been seeking God first, this season is not starting over; it is learning to seek Him in a new rhythm. If you have not, the empty nest is a beautiful place to begin.

The quiet can allow you to rediscover the woman God created you to be - not apart from motherhood, but beyond motherhood. Instead of rushing to fill every silence, become still enough to ask what God wants to teach you and what He wants to do in you through the process.

"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." - Matthew 6:33

A QUESTION FOR THE STUDENT

Where has the role of mother become confused with my deepest identity? What might I hear from God if I did not rush to fill the quiet?

2 Release the Reins

As your child grows into adulthood, love learns to hold differently.

God is asking us to move from the teacher's chair because He wants to teach our adult children in ways a mother never can. Mothers are problem solvers. We hurt when our children hurt, and when they struggle, we want to step in. But they were God's before they were ours. The same God who faithfully pursues our hearts also pursues theirs.

Parenting adult children requires a different kind of trust. When they were young, we corrected, redirected, protected, and made decisions. Now, much of the time, we pray, wait, and trust God to work where we no longer can. We continue to love, pray, and remain available - but we must trust the Teacher. Releasing the reins does not mean releasing our children. It means releasing our need to manage what only God can control. And while He teaches them, He is still teaching us. He never wastes a lesson, and He never stops growing His daughters.

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding." - Proverbs 3:5

A QUESTION FOR THE STUDENT

Where am I trying to manage what belongs to God? What would it look like today to pray, remain available, and trust the Teacher?

3 Release the Regret

Regret is a terrible classroom. It teaches us to stare backward; God's classroom teaches us to trust Him with today.

We cannot rewrite yesterday, but we can trust the Author who is still writing today. God specializes in bringing beauty out of brokenness, hope from heartache, and purpose from pain.

Honest reflection may lead us to repent, apologize, repair what we can, and grow. But shame keeps us trapped in old lessons as though the grace of Christ cannot reach a mother. If you are carrying regret into this season, today is the day to lay it down. God's marvelous grace invites you to learn today's lesson. *"The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit."* - Psalm 34:18

A QUESTION FOR THE STUDENT

Is there a faithful act of apology or repair I need to make? If not, what lesson can I carry forward while placing the regret itself into God's hands?

No two empty nests look alike

Some women celebrated when the last child left; others cried for weeks. Some are somewhere in between. Some have grandchildren filling the house with laughter. Others are waiting for a phone call that has not come. Some carry the pain of estrangement, pray for prodigal sons and daughters, grieve children they have buried, or wonder whether their best years are behind them.

Every woman has walked a different road, but we share the same Teacher. He knows where you are in your journey, what wounds need healing, where your faith is growing, what lesson you are ready to learn, and what He is preparing next. Do not compare your classroom or your lesson with someone else's. Stay close to the Teacher.

4 Release the Reach

Your reach into your adult child's life has limits. God's reach does not.

You cannot control your adult child's decisions, relationships, beliefs, consequences, timing, or access to you. As hard as it is to acknowledge, you may no longer be a major influence in every part of that life.

Loving an adult child well sometimes means resisting the urge to push back into spaces God is asking you to release. You can love deeply, pray faithfully, and remain available without trying to remain central. Your reach may have changed, but God's has not.

"Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?" - Psalm 139:7

A QUESTION FOR THE STUDENT

Where am I pushing to regain access or influence? Can I place that space in the hands of the God whose presence can reach where mine cannot?

Do not fill the silence too quickly

Our first instinct in an empty nest may be to fill the silence: another committee, Bible study, volunteer opportunity, project, or responsibility. There is nothing wrong with any of those things. But if we are not careful, we will fill our calendars before we have allowed God to fill our hearts.

THE FIRST ASSIGNMENT

The first assignment of the emptiness is not activity. It is attentiveness.

Get still and become a student again. Open God's Word. Spend time in prayer. Sit quietly, listen, pay attention, and notice:

- the Scriptures that keep drawing your attention,
- the people God keeps bringing across your path, • the burdens He keeps placing on your heart, and

- the doors He quietly begins opening.

This is what it means to become a Noticer in the empty nest: slowing down long enough to recognize what God is teaching you, where He is working, and how He may be preparing you for what comes next. You do not have to manufacture a calling. Remain close to the One who calls. God is the One who takes the initiative; your part is to slow down long enough to recognize Him. The quiet gives you more room to meet with God, listen, and learn.

The quiet is preparation, not a pause

God is not asking you to hurry toward your next assignment. He may be preparing you for it. Before Moses received his assignment, God prepared him in the wilderness. Before David wore a crown, God shaped him in lonely fields. Before Paul began his missionary journeys, God met and prepared him away from the public eye. God prepares His people before He sends them.

“Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” - Isaiah 43:19

God is writing your story. One day you may look back and recognize His fingerprints across circumstances you could not understand while you were living them. Your empty nest is not outside His story, and His story is better than anything you could imagine.

Four truths to carry with you

Release the Role: My role may change, but my identity as God's daughter does not.

Release the Reins: My adult children were God's before they were mine. I can trust the Teacher.

Release the Regret: I cannot rewrite yesterday, but I can trust the Author who is still writing today.

Release the Reach: My reach has limits. God's reach does not.

A Prayer for the Empty-Nest Classroom

Lord, You know what this transition has changed in me and what I am still learning to release. Thank You that my belonging has not changed and that You have not stopped teaching me. Give me wisdom for this season. Keep me from rushing to fill the quiet. Help me seek You, listen, and notice what You are doing in my heart. I do not want to manufacture a calling; I want to remain close to You, the One who calls. I come with open hands. Teach me. Amen.

ONE LAST THING TO NOTICE

God often gets our attention in the moments we almost miss. When the house goes quiet, class isn't over. It's just begun. And in all of life - including the empty nest - God is where the joy is.