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Encouragement for Today

"Empty Nest verses Fulfilling Next"

Susanne Scheppmann, Co-editor of Online Devotions, Proverbs 31 Speaker Team Member

Key Verse:

Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (NIV)

Devotion:

I now enjoy that my chicks have flown the coop. However, that wasn't always the case. I mourned for my first son when he left home. His empty seat haunted me from across the dinner table. I dreaded it when my daughter graduated and moved to California. I bawled when my youngest son joined his older brother in Minnesota, a mere 1,700 miles away from me.

But now? Although I love my children dearly, I am glad they are competent and independent grown adults. I will always be their mother, but now I can be their friend too. I realize that when certain seasons of life pass, such as raising children, then God provides pathways to new adventures. Because He promises, "He plans to prosper us... and to give us a hope and future." (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV) Life is not over when our children leave home; it's just a new beginning.

An exciting and unknown journey begins each time we enter a new phase in our spiritual life. We should look back where we have been and what we have been through during the years. Henry Blackaby calls these spiritual markers. He writes in *Experiencing God*, "God works in sequence to accomplish His divine purposes. What He did in the past was done with a Kingdom purpose in mind. What He is doing in the present is in the sequence with the past with the same Kingdom purpose in mind. Every act of God builds on the past with a view toward the future. . . A spiritual marker identifies a time of transition, decision, or direction."

So, the "empty nest" is a time to transition to the "fulfilling next". What's in your past that you can use to fulfill your future? What dusty dreams do you still hope to achieve?

For example, I recently spoke at a Mothers of Preschoolers Event. I met a woman who was on a brand new adventure. Her children were grown up and long gone from her home. Yet, she held a darling foster daughter in her arms. My new friend told me she had always wanted to nurture abused and neglected children in her home. However, she did not have enough room until her own children went to college. This motivated woman had now transitioned her home into a foster care and loved every minute of it.

Next with a smile and chuckle, she introduced me to her married daughter. This daughter sat beside her bouncing a cooing baby on her lap. Yes - Grandma, foster daughter, grown daughter and granddaughter all attended the same MOPS group.

So, have your kids flown the nest? If yes, it's your time to fulfill the next spiritual marker God places in your life. Let your imagination and dreams soar. Write your book. Finish your nursing degree. Volunteer at church. It's your turn to fly!

My Prayer for Today:

Father, thank You for this new opportunity to soar into Your eternal purpose for my life. Help me to review my past and discover my new purpose beyond raising my children. Give me the courage to step out into the new adventure that awaits me beyond the empty nest. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Application Steps:

Spend some time reviewing your life. Make a list of past spiritual markers in your life and consider what they have prepared you to do now. Jot down a few dreams that you would like to accomplish. Then determine to step out in faith to achieve what God's purpose is for you in the future.

Reflection Points:

Do I believe God has a plan for my life beyond motherhood?

What spiritual markers make me who I am today and what I could become?

Where do I see myself in ten years?

What can I do that would make my children proud of me?

Power Verses:

Philippians 2:13, "For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." (NIV)

Proverbs 24:14, "Know also that wisdom is sweet to your soul; if you find it, there is a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off." (NIV)

Proverbs 16:3, "Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed." (NIV)

Ephesians 2:10, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (NIV)

Psalm 138:8, "The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your love, O Lord, endures forever – do not abandon the works of your hands." (NIV)

Additional Resources:

What Happens When Women Walk in Faith, by Lysa TerKeurst

http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_whatHappens.htm

Get Over It and On With It, by Michelle McKinney Hammond

http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_getOverIt.htm

Living Life on Purpose, by Lysa TerKeurst

http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_livingLife.htm