

# PERSPECTIVE

JUNE 2019

## THE *empty* NEST





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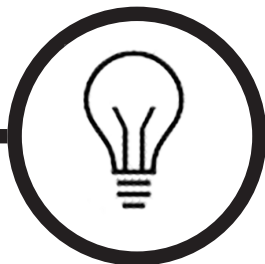
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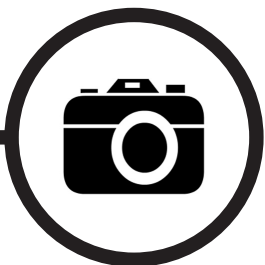
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## The Empty Nest

A family of birds is building their nest in our backyard for the third year in a row. We watch as they line their nest with leaves and sticks from our yard and then hunker down to protect their little eggs. The best part is when the babies hatch. We get to see both mom and dad bringing food for the little ones, and after several weeks, it's kind of emotional to watch the babies fly from their safe and comfortable nest. The parents are nearby as the chicks get their first taste of independence, and then they quickly let their babies go and fly out into the backyard alone. It's such a vivid picture of God's good order and plan.

Parenting is a job that really never ends, but it certainly looks different in its varied stages. We are "empty nesters," and that means that we've been through the most physically demanding, hands-on years of raising our family. Our children are all grown up now and have (for the most part) left the home.

Parenting typically consists of a series of increasingly poignant goodbyes. There's the first time in the church nursery—will they cry inconsolably? Or the first overnight with the grandparents—will they miss us? Or the first solo trip in the car as a 16-year-old—will they make it home safely? Then there's the big one when they actually leave home for the first time. The college drop-off days for both of our children are forever etched in our hearts. Anticipating the big goodbye, holding back the tears with the last hug, and the sadness of returning to a quiet home marked a turning point in the story of our family. Our carefully tended nest was empty. We didn't realize it then, but God had good things in store for us.

### WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT THE EMPTY NEST?

There is nothing in the Bible that specifically addresses the empty nest, so how can we think biblically about it? We need to go back to the beginning. In Genesis 1:28, we learn that man and woman were to multiply, to have children. Not long after that in Genesis 2:24, right after God gives Eve to Adam as his helper, we learn that a man is to leave his parents at the time that he takes a wife. It's interesting that Adam and Eve had no parents. God seems to be pointing forward to the inevitability that one day their own children would leave their care.

We can also glean some principles to help us think biblically about the empty nest. Psalm 127 tells us that the children of one's youth are a blessing and a reward. They are like arrows to be launched out into the world.

It is God's plan for children to go forth from the home to accomplish the purposes he has for them. Proverbs 22:6 alludes to this stage when the writer gives the instruction to train up a child in the way he should go so that when he is old, he might know the way. Barring any special needs or circumstances, children must eventually go!

In essence, the empty nest is one of the targets on the trajectory of parenting. Throughout Scripture, we encounter the idea of children coming of age. In 1 Corinthians 13:11, Paul talks about putting off childish ways and behaving and thinking like a man. In Luke 2:52, we see Jesus "increas[ing] in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man." We want our children to attain to this godly adulthood marked by independent, godward thinking and living.

### WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES OF THIS SEASON?

Transition is hard, and becoming an empty nester is no exception. It looks different on everyone. For us, there was some sadness. We missed our kids! Things felt so different after the big drop-off when we walked into our home which just 12 hours earlier was a frenzy of activity. Now, there was an eerie quiet and stillness (except for the dog) in every room. Soon the house would be perfectly clean, and we would be sitting down for our first meal for two in a very long time.

For some, the sadness persists and the loneliness is heavy. Moms especially can feel a sense of uselessness without their children constantly in the home. Others worry about how their children will handle this newly gained freedom from mom and dad. Some parents feel regret if they're unsure they've used the at-home years as well as they should have to train their children in righteousness.

Mom and dad now have stretches of uninterrupted time together, and some may not be ready for it. If the home has been child-centered and the marriage neglected while raising the children, it will be a struggle to re-connect and enjoy life as a couple again.

Take my advice: Christian parents, don't center your life around your kids! Your children are a welcome addition and great blessing to your family, but remember your family is whole when you say your marriage vows. Children need to know that mom and dad's relationships to God are foremost in the home. Mom and dad's relationship to each other falls next in the order of things. Children are the happy beneficiaries of the fruit of these two primary relationships. Don't neglect your marriage while your young children are in the home. Pursue each other,

talk about things other than the children when you are together, intentionally enjoy your spouse even in the busiest times of child-rearing. And remember, your primary identity is in Christ, not in being a spouse or a parent.

## WHAT ARE THE BLESSINGS OF THE EMPTY NEST?

To our great surprise and pleasure, the empty nest has proved to be a uniquely fruitful season. There are the obvious benefits of uninterrupted conversations, less laundry, a cleaner house, and the ability to travel. But we also have more time for each other, and that's been sweet! After 30 years of marriage, we are growing even closer as we get to serve and learn together.

Essentially, we've discovered that the term "empty nest" is not a great descriptor. Not only is our nest not empty (after all, we are still there)<sup>1</sup>, but it also feels fuller than ever. In fact, the greatest blessing of this stage of life is a new degree of availability and an increased capacity. Empty nesters may have the advantage of more time and energy to invest in the life of the church—to disciple younger members, to work, to serve, and to teach. And as we think about fostering a culture of family ministry at Mount Vernon, empty nesters are in a unique position to carry out some of the Titus 2 mandates in a more robust way.

## HOW CAN EMPTY NESTERS CAN RELATE TO THE CHURCH FAMILY?

Our children being grown and gone is not an excuse to become inwardly focused. It's not time to check out because we've served our time. The empty nest is not about us, but it is a God-ordained season to bear fruit. Jeremiah 17:7–8 paints the picture of this fruitful servant. "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit." Circumstances may have changed, but God has not changed. So we recalibrate, place our trust squarely on him, and continue to obediently serve him.

If you're an empty nester or if it's in view for you, get excited! With clean hands and a pure heart, surrender your own desires to God and ask him to direct your steps and to grow in you a love for his church. Spend plenty of time in the word and in prayer to tend your own soul. Then gather regularly and often with the church body so that you will know your brothers and sisters and be known

by them. Mingle with members in different stages of life. Look to see where there are needs and prayerfully fill them. Cultivate deep friendships in the church by spending time outside our scheduled gatherings with other members.

As Mount Vernon encourages us to partner with parents to point children to Christ, you can be a valuable source of wisdom and encouragement when you serve in the children's ministry. By opening up God's word to the toddlers, children, and teens in our midst, we act as one family. Our children's ministry director explains, "If we are one family, we recognize that the work of sharing the gospel to children isn't over when your own children believe the gospel. There is precious work to be done in sharing the gospel with all the children who are among us and with all the children who will be among us."<sup>2</sup>

Speak to young parents after services and ask them how they're doing in their marriages and in their parenting. Find out how you might pray for them, advise them, or practically help them. Schedule a time to meet up to answer their questions or get to know their children. You may not have parented perfectly (we certainly didn't), but you have hindsight, wisdom, and the Holy Spirit to offer much needed words of comfort and instruction.

We can personally commend to you the delight of discipling<sup>3</sup> a younger man or woman. It may seem like a scary step to take, but if you are born again and have walked with Christ for some time, it is one you should take. As a more experienced spouse and parent, you have influence. "You can have gospel influence" in the lives of others not only "through your strengths, but also through your weakness."<sup>4</sup> So open up your life and your home to encourage younger church members with the truth of God's word and the testimony of his faithfulness. Titus 2 gives particularly clear instruction to older men and women. They are to teach and model holy living to younger believers in a way that makes the transforming gospel glorious and attractive.

There are many other outlets for serving, but it seems that the things which require more time and experience are well-suited for empty nesters.

## HOW SHOULD THE CHURCH RELATE TO EMPTY NESTERS?

Many empty nesters don't have a lot of visible needs—we don't need babysitters, we probably don't need help loading a moving truck, and many of us are seemingly self-sufficient at this point in life. But we need each other! We are better together as we share the gospel and pursue holiness! We need younger and older

sisters and brothers to encourage and love us so that we are reminded of God's faithfulness in every season. Ultimately, we are all to be pointing each other to Christ!

Here are some things you might want to know:

*We are still moms and dads!* We have children who are always in our hearts, though you may not see them often or know them. Ask how you can pray for our children. Ask how you can pray for us in this stage of parenting, because we are always parenting!

*We want to know your children.* Don't hesitate to include older adults in your gatherings, even and especially if children will be present. Let us be around them and enjoy them and know them. It's really a joy to be a friend to the youngest generation! This kind of inclusion was one of the things that really helped us to thrive in the church after our kids left home. Being invited into your lives, being allowed to know and love your kids helped us see that we are always to be spiritually parenting the next generation.

*Ask us questions.* We have been where you are if you're single, or newly married, or still have kids in the home. Ask us how we incorporated the gospel into the dailiness of parenting, what we wish we'd known when we were your age, how God blessed us as we raised our kids, what sins we struggled with the most in parenting, and how we fought against those things. We agree that we would love to have been at Mount Vernon when our kids were little. You are in an amazing environment to raise your family. Let us encourage you! And let us pray for you and your children. Trust us with your requests and let us join you in praying for the salvation of your children.

*Be sensitive.* Some empty nesters are parents of adult children who are not following Christ. This is a hard situation, and your awareness of such trials will help you to better love and pray for your brothers and sisters. Remember that no amount of good parenting guarantees a child will follow Christ, so let this realization lead you to not only seek out advice from empty nesters but also to be a source of encouragement to them.

One of the sweetest things that we experienced as our children were first leaving the home was the support of those parents a stage or two ahead of us. Moms and dads who understood the emotions and challenges we were facing lovingly listened to and encouraged us. Older church members have a wealth of wisdom that we desperately need. Don't hesitate to pull us aside and share it!

## CONCLUSION

Every season is ordained by God and therefore purposeful and meaningful. As we walk through the seasons of life together as one family at Mount Vernon, we desire unity and gospel-community. "In the most intimate terms imaginable, God says the Christian doesn't have to be alone. God has given us more than friends; he has given us family."<sup>5</sup> How amazing that we all have a role to play in shaping the youngest generation!

Fellow empty nesters, pray and ask God to help you "number your days that [you] may get a heart of wisdom" (Psalms 90:12) so that you can be a blessing to your church family. Then look for practical ways to invest in the lives of the youngest generation. Older friends, thank you for being a source of encouragement to those who are learning to be faithful empty nesters. Don't stop reminding us of God's kindness and faithfulness. And younger friends, thank you for including us in your children's lives. God is glorified as we love one another this way.

– Shirley & Larry Chandler

<sup>1</sup> Jim Newheiser and Elyse Fitzpatrick, *You Never Stop Being a Parent* (P & R Publishing, 2010), 20.

<sup>2</sup> Kyle Gross, "Parenting with Parents," *Perspective*, February 2019. [mvbchurch.org/files/Perspective\\_February\\_2019.pdf](http://mvbchurch.org/files/Perspective_February_2019.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Discipling is simply "deliberately doing spiritual good to someone so that he or she will be more like Christ." Mark Dever, *Discipling* (Crossway, 2016), 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Discipling*, 26.

<sup>5</sup> Aaron Menikoff, "The Church as One Family," *Perspective*, January 2019. [mvbchurch.org/files/Perspective\\_January\\_2019.pdf](http://mvbchurch.org/files/Perspective_January_2019.pdf).



# ***This Changes Everything: How the Gospel Transforms the Teen Years***

Written by Jaquelle Crowe



**NEWSFLASH:** I am not a teenager, but I loved reading this book. Miss Crowe has written a book for teens, yet one that is also for all the church. Whether you are a teenager, parent of a teen, or just know a teen, you will be encouraged by the reminder of our identity in Christ alone. Crowe shows how the gospel affects every aspect of our lives and provides helpful tips on how to live in this world without becoming like this world.

*For the teenager:*

You, teenager, will enjoy reading this book because it was written by one of your own.

Jaquelle was only eighteen years old when she published this book! She provides great practical help for you whether you are trying to find a Bible reading plan, memorize Scripture, listen to a sermon (even really long sermons), or examine the music you listen to. Crowe's book will help you to think through how to practically begin applying the gospel in your daily life and relationships.

*For the Parent of a Teenager (or soon to be teen):*

Parent, this book will be an aid as you are helping your child prepare to enter the world apart from your authority. We all remember those first days with our babies thinking of the many years we would have to raise them. For those of us who are about to send our first off to college, we can attest that those many years pass far too quickly. I found this book to be a great reminder of the things I need to talk about with my children now before they are walking in the world on their own. Crowe addresses helpful topics including developing a clear understanding of the whole story of the Bible, time management in light of the gospel, and relationships.

*For those who know a teenager:*

This is an excellent book to read with your teenaged grandchildren, niece/nephew, family friend, or as a part of a discipleship group with teens at Mount Vernon. Crowe has helpfully laid out each chapter with discussion questions, so it will be an easy way to speak together about the transforming power of the gospel.

Praise God the gospel transforms the teen years, and every year after that as well! No matter our age in the family of God, may we all continue to help each other as we are being changed into His likeness.

— RECOMMENDED BY CAROLYN ROBERTS

## Excerpts From the Book

### 1

"And so Christians aren't just Jesus-followers; they're also Jesus-worshippers. We owe God every last drop of our passion and service and devotion."

— Our Story, p.41

### 2

"The gospel doesn't save us to be loners. The gospel saved us so we can invest in the church, and it can invest in us."

— Our Community, p.61

### 3

"Pursuing holiness without accountability is like walking down a narrow road sandwiched between two deep ditches. It would be impossibly easy to fall astray without the guidance of accountability's guardrails."

— Our Sin, p.75

### 4

"What are you doing today that is not worthwhile in light of eternity? Are you missing opportunities? Are you wasting good works?"

— Our Time, p.120

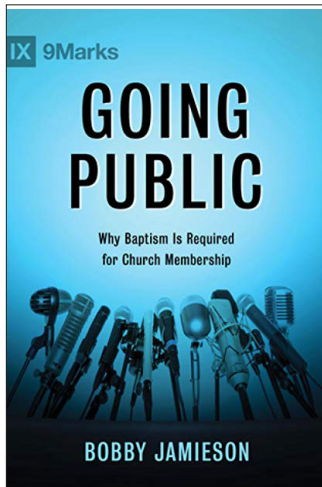
### 5

"The gospel means every single relationship you have should be about becoming more like Jesus as you do good to others. In Scripture, there is one clear way this plays out — love."

— Our Relationships, p.133

## Going Public: Why Baptism Is Required for Church Membership

Written by Bobby Jamieson



In *Going Public*, Bobby Jamieson builds an argument for the biblical requirement of baptism for church membership and, in turn, partaking in the Lord's Supper. After giving thoughtful validation of the debate's merit, the book begins with an excellent theological overview of credobaptism itself, i.e. believer's baptism. On this foundation, the heart of the book focuses on how the ordinances of baptism and communion relate to the New Covenant and local church. Baptism is described as the initiating oath-sign of the New Covenant, which binds one to many as witnessed

in the early church (Acts 2:38-41). Under a fulfilled New Covenant, communion is then a renewing oath-sign which binds the baptized many into one (1 Cor. 10:17; 11:17-29). The church, therefore, cannot depart from these requisites as they are the very means God has ordained to publicly define it!

After a summarizing chapter of his cases for baptism and communion, Jamieson responds to what he feels are the strongest objections to this "closed membership" view and provides counter-arguments to "open membership," which does not require believer's baptism for joining a local church. The book then ends with practical implications and guidance for implementing this stance into a local church's polity.

*Going Public* is an excellent resource for anyone engaged in the infant versus believer's baptism discussion or looking for a better understanding of the biblical defense for closed membership. To those who are in their first stages of diving into this topic, I would recommend starting with a basic primer (or Google search) before reading Jamieson's book to have a general grasp on the claims of infant and believer's baptism, along with their respective covenant theologies. Although not the lightest of reading for me personally, I learned a great deal about this ancient debate between fellow brothers and sisters of Christ and now feel a greater appreciation for the weightiness of church membership and intimacy of communion. This discourse may be far from over, but it is always worth wrestling with Scripture to uncover God's faithful love and perfect provision for his people.

— RECOMMENDED BY CLARK COCHRAN

### Excerpts From the Book

## 1

"The gospel is Scripture's center, goal, heartbeat, and more. Yet the gospel is not all that God has to say. So-called 'secondary issues' matter in their own right because they matter to God. Therefore, seeking to faithfully obey God's commands about secondary issues poses no inherent threat to primary issues."

— Clearing Ground, p. 30

## 2

"[B]aptism is a public profession of faith and repentance which signifies cleansing, forgiveness, union with Christ, new life in Christ, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the new creation."

— Where Faith Goes Public, p.49

## 3

"The Lord's Supper makes many one because by it we participate in the realities that unite us to Christ and therefore to one another. In the same act by which we renew our pledge to Christ, we renew our pledge to our fellow church members. The Lord's Supper is a corporate covenant renewal."

— One Bread, One Body, p.134

## 4

"[Baptism and Communion] effect a new, mutual relation between the Christians who participate in them together. In baptism a believer submits to the church, and the church affirms the believer's profession, creating the relation we call "membership." In the Lord's Supper the church is constituted as one body by participating in Christ's salvation together. Baptism binds one to many, and the Lord's Supper binds many into one."

— Badges of Belonging, p.150

# JUNE

*These Scripture readings have been selected to help you prepare for the Sunday morning message. Take Up & Read!*

June 1	Luke 11:29–32	June 17	Genesis 1:26–31
<b>June 2</b>	<b>Jonah 4:1–9</b>	June 18	Exodus 32:1–10
June 3	Ephesians 2:11–21	June 19	Psalms 115
June 4	Ephesians 3:1–13	June 20	Psalms 135
June 5	Romans 3:1–8	June 21	Jeremiah 10:1–12
June 6	Romans 9:1–18	June 22	Acts 14:8–18
June 7	Isaiah 49:1–6	<b>June 23</b>	<b>Acts 14:8–18</b>
June 8	Acts 13:44–52	June 24	2 Corinthians 1:3–11
<b>June 9</b>	<b>Acts 13:44–52</b>	June 25	2 Corinthians 11:16–33
June 10	Acts 4:23–30	June 26	2 Timothy 2:1–13
June 11	Acts 5:12–16	June 27	2 Timothy 4:1–8
June 12	Romans 15:14–21	June 28	Job 2:1–10
June 13	Hebrews 2:1–4	June 29	Acts 14:19–23
June 14	Ruth 1:6–18	<b>June 30</b>	<b>Acts 14:19–23</b>
June 15	Acts 14:1–7	<b>*Sermons in bold</b>	
<b>June 16</b>	<b>Acts 14:1–7</b>		

# TAKE UP & READ



# NEW MEMBERS

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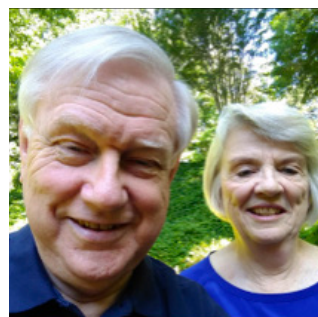
Zek & Tracy  
Burke  
Samantha (5),  
Sebastian (3)



Rich Lee



Neal & Deborah  
Parker  
Amelia (8),  
Claire (6), Emma  
(4), Lydia (3)



Robert Stroupe  
& Marcia Cassell



*Mount Vernon*  
BAPTIST CHURCH