

Mark Merrill: 4 Reasons Why Our Empty Nest Isn't Empty

Susan and I knew there would come a day. That day has now come.

Our five children have grown up. They are no longer living in our home full-time. Because we knew that day would arrive, we were intentional about how we raised our kids. While we were privileged to spend loads of time with them and energy and emotion on them, we made sure our entire universe did not revolve around them. We made sure we focused on our marriage during those 23 years as well.

Sure, there were seasons in raising our kids when Susan and I didn't give our marriage all the nurturing it needed, but overall, we worked to maintain things like dates nights, little trips away for just the two of us and relationships with a few other couples.

Even so, emotions overwhelmed me when each of our kids left the nest. I didn't just cry when our youngest child left; I cried each time one of our kids left home. Yet our nest is not empty. Here are a few reasons why.

1. We have each other. Because of our intentionality in focusing on our marriage, Susan and I are enjoying roosting in the nest together. Rather than looking at each other like strangers due to a neglected marriage, we are able to look at each other with a smile and excitement for our future together. Now date nights aren't just happening once every week or two; they are happening a few times a week. Now we are able to do more activities like bike riding, walking, working and traveling together. Now we can dream more together. Now we can pursue our "bucket lists" together.

2. We connect with our children often. As I look at our fall

schedule, it seems like we'll see one of our kids just about every other weekend. We're going to see them or they're coming to see us. On top of that, Susan and I text and talk with them just about every day. FaceTime and Instagram are fun ways to stay connected as well.

3. We are reconnecting with friends. As our children moved through their teen years, Susan and I made it a point not to schedule much on the weekends with others. We wanted to be available to our kids. If they didn't go out, we hung out at home or did something with them. If they did go out, we were here when they got home to chat about their evening or to just say goodnight. Oh, sure, we did things with friends, but we didn't stay in touch that much with a number of friends we enjoying being with. So now we are starting to catch up on some of those relationships.

4. We are serving others more. When our kids were in the home full-time, our time was occupied with them. Yes, we went on missions trips with them and sought some opportunities to serve others, but now there is even greater opportunity to do little things for people in need.

Susan and I are thankful that our empty nest really isn't empty. It's different, but it's not empty. And we're grateful to be in the nest together.

What are you doing to prepare for that day when your children leave your nest? If they already have, how are you handling it?

Mark Merrill is the president of Family First. For the original article, visit [.](#)