

## The Empty Nest

My wife, Lola, and I are experiencing “the empty nest syndrome.” Literally. No, we do not have children. But there have been three hungry mouths around our house squawking almost hourly to be fed. But now they are gone. It’s quiet again. And a little sad.

You see, about a year ago, Lola bought this very attractive bird house (she collects them, and has quite a variety), and put it on a post outside the master bathroom window. The bird house is tall and thin in dimensions, and the front and back “doors,” or holes, into it are so small that I wondered if any birds would wish to occupy it. For most of that year, it sat empty; my conclusion was that the bird house was created simply as a yard ornament.

A few weeks ago, however, a pair of birds began checking it out, and soon were seen carrying nest construction materials inside. They appeared to be house wrens. Their songs are distinctive, and they quickly caught my wife’s attention. I should point out here that birds and animals, as well as people, are drawn to Lola. If we are in a public park, or walking along a greenway, ducks or dogs believe they have a friend in her, and want to get close. In our backyard, she has three bird feeders – one resembling a round gazebo positioned on a decorative pole, and two others hanging from limbs of a tree. Our next-door neighbor has similar bird feeders fashioned to a tree, but the birds most often choose Lola’s. Even when she is in the backyard, her presence does not alarm them at all; they seem to welcome it.

About 10 days ago, new sounds were coming from the bird house. Upon investigation, tiny beaks could be seen inside the bird house door. Eventually, three baby birds were counted. They sang a high-pitched, rapid-fire song – certain signals that they wanted to be fed. Diligently, the mother bird attended to their cries. They sang in the morning, they sang throughout the day, they sang in the evening. They were up early in the morning when I was, their songs accompanying my ritual of shaving. They serenaded Lola as she watched through the window, three feet away. They clamored for attention before bedtime, providing their own strange kind of lullaby for a couple of adults.

On Tuesday, July Fourth, Lola’s birthday, the first little bird ventured out into this strange new world, and promptly fell onto the ground below. Dazed and a little shaken, he (or she, I’m not sure which) hopped around in the grass, and then tried his wings. A bit amazed, it seemed, he flew into a bush. He now knew he could fly. The second bird followed shortly thereafter, also falling to the ground, tried his wings sooner, and came back up to the porch of the bird house. From there, it was off into the trees. The third bird had a tougher time. Watching the experience of his siblings, he, too, tried to come out of the bird house door. He

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appeared to think he was too fat to exit; indeed, his body did look too round for the hole. He would start out, then back up; muster up his courage, get halfway through, and then retreat. This went on numerous times until he retired to rest awhile. Sometime during the night of July Fourth, he made it out and flew away; the next morning, the bird house was devoid of sight and sound.

It's quiet just beyond the window of the master bathroom now. The new day isn't greeted quite the same way. Those three little birds are off on an adventure. We wish them well; we hope they are safe. God cares about them, too. Psalm 50:11 proclaims: *I know all the birds of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are mine.*

If the Creator says that about birds, how much more does He know – and is concerned about – you? Take encouragement in the fact that you are a child of the King, and He loves you as you go about your own adventures in this world today.

--Beecher Hunter