

Fired, Demoted or Promoted?

The changing role of full time mom to the empty nest and how to adjust.

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I was being fired from the best job I had ever had...and that is saying a lot when you considered my resume. I had been working since I was 15 and had held more jobs than you could count using all of your fingers and toes. But this job...this was my absolute favorite and it was being “outsourced.” The pay wasn’t great and the hours were long and sometimes tiresome, but this job had held my heart like no other.

It was the summer of 2005. Our only two children (who were young adults) had both announced plans that would soon change the dynamics of our home. Our daughter (the oldest at almost 20) had become engaged to a gospel preacher; she would be marrying in October and moving to a town nearby. Our son had just shared his decision to leave California at the ripe old age of 17 and attend a college thousands of miles away in Tennessee, and he would be leaving in August. My services would no longer be needed. My job as Mom was quickly slipping away like the sand in an hourglass. I was heartbroken.

I was a stay-at-home mom until the kids started school. I enjoyed those baby years so very much and would not have traded them for anything. I took part-time work during the elementary grades, making sure I was home when school let out. Money was constantly tight but our children were our first priority. I held several jobs over those early years, but during their high school days, I finally found my niche in commercial real estate. I enjoyed being a real estate broker. I leased and sold offices, retail sites, industrial buildings, and vacant commercial land. It was the second best job I had ever had, but the absolutely most favorite job and my heart belonged to that of the job known as motherhood. Now that job is undergoing a transformation, I enter a new chapter in life.

Caught up in the craziness of planning a wedding and packing up a son for college, the enormity of the upcoming change didn’t sink in for a few weeks. When it did, it hit me like a ton of bricks. Our daughter had begun attending worship services at the small congregation where her fiancé was preaching. It was truly odd not having her in services at our home church. She had

always been active in our youth group and a source of encouragement to the other teens. Every time our son was called upon to lead singing, deliver a talk, or offer a prayer, my heart would twist with sadness...more than once I cried through the whole service. A few of the Christians laughed it off and advised that I would enjoy being 'childless'. Some of my close Christian friends offered a hug or invited me to lunch. I was even offered advice saying that since I was in my 40s, I was probably having hormonal problems and that it would go away with menopause. I had suffered previous bouts of depression before. I knew it wasn't just hormones.

I soon reached for my Bible. I knew the Word of God was filled with examples of women and the struggles they endured while here on this earth. Surely I could find an example of a woman going through the "empty nest syndrome." I scratched my head...well there was...or, how about...hmmm.... I suddenly realized that the Scriptures remain oddly silent on this very painful time that many mothers experience.

Women will eagerly share their childbirth stories, going into great detail about how long (or some cases how short) their labor pains were. They will happily scare innocent young brides, making them second-guess any plans they have for becoming mothers anytime soon. The Bible is filled with stories of women becoming pregnant and giving birth., the most famous, of course, being our Lord's young mother, Mary. There is also Hannah the mother of Samuel. I have always been in awe of her courage and dedication to God as she brought her little one back to the temple to serve alongside Eli. Could I have given up my firstborn to only see the child at annual visits? I was doubtful, although early in our marriage I promised the Father if He would bless us with children I would do my very best to rear them as His servants. I prayed and thanked God for the opportunity that we had been blessed with. We had raised two fine Christian young people! However, waking up with only two of us in the house was going to be very lonely. I had thoroughly enjoyed the chaos of living with teens. Our home was a constant flurry of activity. This new silence would be a stark contrast. Yes, I was losing the best job I had ever had and I felt like I was being fired, but I knew that God would help get me through this.

I soon realized that perhaps the Scriptures were silent because much like childbirth, having your nest emptied is easier for some than for others. (I had friends who clicked their heels in joy when the last child moved out and sang aloud, "It's the most wonderful time of the year.") For me getting through that difficult time was eased by the care of a loving Christian husband,

medication, and a consistent prayer life. Now, looking back in hindsight, maybe I wasn't actually fired... maybe I was just demoted (or promoted), depending on your view.

I have slowly adjusted to my different role (and a different phase) in motherhood. I wish there were a handbook written on these things! Our grown children still love to come home and we love having them, but I can now also enjoy the peace and quiet of just the two of us. Occasionally I miss all of the chaos, but I understand that God has different roles for different times in our lives. Mothers, be prepared for the transition when it comes your way. If you are a mother with children still at home, cherish each and every day for it is truly a gift from God. The days spent with your children living under your roof will fly by!