



10 TOOLS for the EMPTY NEST MARRIAGE

www.laurathomasauthor.com



Hello there, friend! Welcome to your free copy of:

“10 TOOLS FOR THE EMPTY NEST MARRIAGE”

I’m a published Christian author and write “heartwarming encouragement for your soul” in my fiction novels, newlyweds' marriage book, stories, articles, devotions, and blog.

My husband and I have been married since 1988 and are empty nesters with a heart for marriage ministry, and I’m delighted to share some empty nesting nuggets with you.

You’ll find tips and encouragement to create and sustain a strong, healthy marriage in this exciting chapter of life! Plus, an empty nest that is filled with love, even if it’s no longer filled with children.

A place where you and your spouse will flourish and grow together.

I pray these tools will help to fill your home and your marriage with love, laughter, peace, and purpose!

Feel free to contact me on my website: www.laurathomasauthor.com
or at: laura@laurathomasauthor.com

Blessings & joy,

Laura





“Come grow old with me. The best is yet to be.” William Wordsworth

1. DATE NIGHTS:

I can't stress enough how vital this tool is in any marriage. Whether you are pre-empty nest or living it for real, regular date nights are invaluable!

They don't have to be fancy or expensive, it can be lunch or coffee or a walk or a picnic or a concert or a movie—just let it be intentional alone time for the two of you. Preferably, once a week. Belly laugh or have deep and meaningful conversations. Don't be fooled into thinking the two of you in a house alone counts as a “date night”. This evening/ morning/ afternoon needs to be planned and purposeful and protected! You won't regret it.

2. NO'S

It may be helpful to decide what you DON'T want your empty nest years to look like in order to see what you actually *do* want. Make a list and talk about the flip side of each item. Here are some examples we considered:

We don't want to be selfish.

We don't want to waste the time we have been given.

We don't want to ever be a financial drain on anyone.

We don't want to navel-gaze and rest on our laurels.

We don't want to have an attitude of mature entitlement.

3. MUTUAL ACTIVITIES:

What are your interests, passions, and activities?

It's good to have individual activities but find a few you can do together... perhaps something brand new. It may take some trial and error until you find activities or interests that appeal to you both, and some selflessness will most likely be required (!) but you might just surprise yourselves. Pick one each and don't forget to bring a sense of humor and a truckload of grace as you begin. Let's never slide into living two separate parallel lives as mere “roomies”.



4. ROMANCE:

“Never come off your honeymoon, kids. My wife and I have been married many years, and we never came off our honeymoon. It’s the best advice I can give you.”

And this was the best advice we ever received! At a conference when we had just returned home from our honeymoon, author and apologist, Josh McDowell, spoke with us personally and his words have stayed with us ever since.

Being romantic and letting our spouse know we cherish them, takes effort. Special vacations or swanky dinners are fabulous but what about on a regular Tuesday? Hopefully, with the home to ourselves for much of the time now, we’ll find more opportunities to dial up the romance; a sweet compliment in a text, a walk in the park hand-in-hand, or a chocolate bar brought as a surprise. A lingering look, a shared dessert, or wearing a favorite perfume. In fact, sometimes it’s the simple things that mean the most. As a romance writer and a romantic at heart, this one’s important to me. We’re all different, and you and your spouse may even have differing opinions as to what makes the pulse race and the heart melt, so communicate! Skydiving in tandem or snuggled up by the fire reading together—keep the romance alive.



5. HOLIDAYS:

When it comes to the biggies like Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, or even birthdays, listen to your heart. If you hear the sound of it shattering into tiny pieces because you are sitting around the usual table eating the usual food but are desperately missing those familiar faces of your absent kids—why not change the tradition? If it’s just the two of you, shake it up completely!

Perhaps you could go away as a couple for your birthday celebration, invite a different set of friends or neighbors to celebrate Christmas, or eat out for Easter brunch somewhere new.

Shaking it up isn’t erasing the memories. They are yours to treasure always...



6. DREAM:

This is something you can do as a couple and as individuals. **SHARE** your dreams with each other. Encourage. Be his greatest cheerleader. The empty nest does not mean an empty life. Do you want to pursue a career in the workforce? Learn a new skill? Go back to school or take a course online? Find a perfect volunteer position? Think back to your childhood and recall what make you come alive. That will often reveal true passions. Fulfill that buried dream.... I acted upon my dream to write a book after keeping it secret for 25 years. This is a **FUN** tool and will make for some fascinating conversation!



7. PLAN:

Perhaps now you have more time than ever before to actually plan ahead. Part of that could also be reflecting on the previous season and deciding what worked well for you as a couple and what needs to change.

Reflect and then reset as you look at the next season/ month/ year together and ask the following questions to help plan your time effectively while communicating honestly:

What could we do to set work boundaries?

Who could we invite over for dinner?

Which ministry opportunity is God calling us to?

What should our long-distance parenting look like?

How could we serve one another better and maintain date nights?

How could we take notice of the everyday graces in our lives?

When can we plan a getaway out of town and away from distractions to reset and refresh together?



8. HOSPITALITY:

“The heart of hospitality is about creating space for someone to feel seen and heard and loved. It's about declaring your table a safe zone, a place of warmth and nourishment.” Shauna Niequist

Hospitality is all about the heart. I can't tell you how many times I used my kids or busyness as an excuse to not be hospitable. I opened our home as much as I thought was reasonable, but truthfully, it wasn't as often or as willingly as I think God probably had in mind when he says, "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling." (1 Peter 4:9)

Having a nest with extra space, and let's be honest—it's going to stay tidier and cleaner for longer sans kids—we have the opportunity to be more purposeful in being hospitable. Making it something we do regularly and with joy. Not merely having friends or even strangers over for dinner, but opening our hearts in this chapter of our lives. Being a listening ear, a hug, a prayer, a cup of tea, a safe place to share worries, a mentor, a restful haven for the weary. Discuss and pray about ways you can be hospitable as an empty nest couple—serving together can also strengthen your relationship in wonderful ways.



9. GOALS:

As empty-nesters, it's up to you and your spouse to decide what goals you want to set for your marriage. Run a marathon together, both lead a Bible Study, learn to make sushi side-by-side, or travel to Alaska. For us, we want to live each day to the fullest in ways that will prevent spiritual atrophy and physical apathy. Some practical goals could be:

To travel while we are healthy and mobile.

To be available for ministry/ volunteer work.

To invest time in our grown kids and our families.

To work for as long as we are able to be productive, reducing hours along the way.

To grow in our faith as individuals and as a couple.

To be generous.



10. WISDOM FROM THE WORD:

Ultimately, we need wisdom to navigate every season of life, and marriage in the empty nest is no exception. Proverbs 14:1 says "The wise woman builds her house..." (or my version, "feathers her nest") where it refers to the moral fabric, the heart of the home.

It finishes with "but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down." We have that much sway in our "nest" as women. Even when the kids are gone. Even when it's just the two of us again. So how can we live wise, good, godly lives?

Stay rooted in the Word, more now than ever before.

Pray for our marriage.

Pray for our grown kids.

Invest time and energy in this relationship with our husband.

And as a devoted, dynamic married couple of empty nesters, we will have much to offer to make a difference in this world and for God's glory!



Matthew 11:28-30: MSG

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me.

Get away with me and you’ll recover your life.

I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it.

Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.

I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you.

Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”



It's my prayer that our marriages in the empty nest will be steeped in love, laughter, peace, and purpose. That these Bible verses from Matthew 11 will encourage us to walk with Jesus as couples. That in this special chapter of our lives, we might live "freely and lightly" finding real rest in Him, and enjoy those unforced rhythms of grace as we experience **full** lives together in the empty nest.

Thanks for allowing me to share with you...

Laura

“A good marriage isn’t something you find; it’s something you make.” Gary L. Thomas