

## Why the First Day of School is My "After"

In her book *Heart of the Matter*, New York Times Bestselling Author Emily Giffin gently bathes light on something we've probably all had to deal with at some time or another: *the before and after* moment in life that splits our story in two.

She writes:

**"Whenever I hear of someone else's tragedy, I do not dwell on the accident or diagnosis, or even the initial shock waves or aftermath of grief. Instead, I find myself reconstructing those final ordinary moments. Moments that make up our lives. Moments that were blissfully taken for granted---and that likely would have been forgotten altogether but for what followed. The *before* snapshots." (p.1)**



Last night, staring into a drowning darkness, I felt the same way.

Only not because of a diagnosis or, as in the book, brewing marital trouble, **but because I realized that my decade-long stint as a mom of young children was officially over.** This fall, all three of our children are off to school, and yesterday was my last "before." My last day of things being "the way they were." Today is the "after."

My mornings of sitting snugly on the couch with a stack of library books: over.

My afternoons of pushing a cart full of kids up and down the aisles in Target: over.

Days of a noisy house and little voices yelling for help and egg shells cracked into my cookie dough: *all over.*

**I wept out the kind of grief that comes when you've wrung yourself out and lay spent for the good of another... and then have to withdraw. Flip a switch. Change paths. Let go.**

For more than a decade my life has been a satellite in the orbit of motherhood, circling around these small birds, knowing there'd come a day when they'd all take wing.

*And it is so hard. And it kills me to release them.*

Not because I'm longing for more sippy cups or another round at pregnancy. Not because I don't want them to grow up or because I've "lost my identity."

**None of those.**

**It's because *raising my kids has been my joy. Being with them and sharing moments of wonder and discovery have forever captured my heart.*** And though I'll never stop mothering or being their mom, my role has shifted and my place here has changed.

The Lord brought to mind a verse last night:

Hebrews 12:2

[New International Version](#)

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

**I started thinking about Christ and his life here on earth.** I thought about all the love he showed to others, about the teaching he did and the miracles he performed --- and that *despite knowing of the heartbreak that awaited him on the cross* --- he counted it all *a joy*.

While I would never compare myself in such a way to Jesus, I thought about those words and about how they resonate in a new way today for me as a mom. Whenever you share your whole heart with someone else -- or three little "someone else's" -- pain is assured.

*And despite knowing this, I counted it all a joy.*

**I went in with eyes wide open, loving every moment. Storing them up in my heart. Taking pictures in my mind's eye of pigtails in the wind and capes on training wheels.**

And I am so grateful.

**Utterly grateful...for each *day* my birds were in our nest.**