There's a right time for everything



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Not real ones, of course, but the statues. When he passed away three years ago, I chose to keep a crystal eagle from his collection. Its wings are outstretched as it sits atop an object—perhaps just landing or preparing for flight. The intricate details of the statue are an incredible replica of the bird it represents. It is no wonder why my dad was so enamored with this

My dad collected bald eagles.

spectacular creature.

American bald eagles are one of the largest raptors, with wings that can span eight feet. As a powerful and strong bird, it was selected to represent our nation in 1782 with the hope that America would become powerful and strong—and with our freedom, we would soar high in the sky just like the bald eagle.

As majestic as bald eagles are, have you ever seen their nests? Have you considered all that goes into constructing them?

Bald eagles build their nests (called aeries) near the top of a tree in a branched crotch—a pocket created by the connection of two or more limbs. They stack and interweave branches and sticks to create a sturdy base and line the inside with softer materials. Over the years, as eagles reuse their nests annually (sometimes for more than thirty years), they will increase in size as the bird adds to them. There are also times when a storm will destroy part or most of the nest and it needs to be repaired or rebuilt.

Depending on how many years it has been used, the eagle's nest can range both in diameter and height from six to ten feet and it can weigh up to a ton. Friends, that is one big nest!

Now let's talk about the reason for the nest—it's a safe haven for raising their young.

Eaglets hatch, one at a time with one to four days between hatching. Since they grow rapidly, the older ones have a competitive advantage over the others—especially when food may be short.

The parents of the eaglets work together to lovingly feed their young—both by foraging for the food and also tearing it apart to feed their little ones. The bigger the eaglets get, the hungrier they become and the more their parents have to work to feed them.

You may have heard, as have I, that eaglets are pushed out of the nest by one of their parents at a certain stage so that they would be forced to learn to fly or fall. However, from what has been observed, this is not their normal behavior. Rather, eaglets watch and imitate their parents and practice flying with short takeoffs and landings around the nest. As they learn and exercise in this way, they gain strength and agility.

It's around the twelve-week mark when they have fully developed wing strength and skill that they confidently navigate the air with longer flights and become more independent. However, they still have a lot to learn before they can survive on their own. For this reason, they fly away from the nest to learn to hunt but they keep returning to the nest for food. Their parents continue to provide for them until they are proficient in foraging completely on their own.

Similar to the eagle, I have been building my "nest" for almost thirty years. It has become sturdy as "branches and sticks" of wisdom have been added. And the inside has become softer and more comfortable as I have changed my mothering ways and grown in the ways of the Lord. Like the eagle, there were times when parts were damaged by storms and needed to be repaired.

Building, repairing, and remodeling my "nest" over the years has been laborious. But at the same time, it has been a wonderful labor of love with great rewards.

With all there is to do with and for children, and having had four of them, being a mom has been a giant part of my identity. As my eaglets have flown from my nest, one at a time, it's certainly been sad but I always had an eaglet left behind, still snug in my nest.

Until.

Until a couple of weeks ago when I took my youngest child and only daughter, Briella to college. Based on

the buckets of tears I wept at her graduation and the increased anxiety I felt as college drop-off approached, I feared I might need a whole case of tissues for the event.

But here's the thing, as God was preparing my beloved daughter to grow confident in her upcoming flight, He was also preparing me for what was to come. So, as I let Briella go, God reminded me that morning that there is a time for everything. In Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8 (message version) about two-thirds of the way through, the wisest man in history, Solomon said, "A right time to hold on and another to let go...".

It was the right time to let her go and it was going to be okay. There were a few tears that day but surprisingly, in the next few days, I held it together—much better than I had thought.

Until.

Until I received a text from my girl a few days later that said she was struggling a little. I won't break her confidence and share the situation. But in that moment, I cried. I had done so well up until that point. I hadn't even shed a tear for my own heartache. Yet, in learning of her little struggle, the dam broke.

I'm a mother—and for me, compassion for my children is high. I am also a fixer. But suddenly, I could not fix anything for her. So how does a mother eagle respond?

I can only tell you what I did. Though being a mom has been a big part of my identity for so long, I must always default to my main identity—who I am in Christ. His Word has the answer to every life situation and I get to use it to uplift others. So, I texted her some encouraging words back and was grateful that the perfect "Verse of the day" popped up on my phone right then and I was able to share it with her: "Praise the Lord! Every day He helps us with the loads we must carry. He is the God who saves us." Psalm 68:19

In that moment, the Lord reminded me of this: He is the Fixer. And now, it is my job to watch her soar and seek her help from the true Fixer. He will give her strength, He will guide her path, He will provide all she needs, He is with her always, and He will help her soar.

The beautiful part of knowing Jesus and having my main identity in Him is that I know He will do all of these things for me as well—strengthen, guide, provide, and be with me as I soar in whatever He has next for me. Additionally, Jesus will help heal the heartache of an empty nest while also opening my eyes to new, and perhaps exciting things in this next season of life.

Speaking of nests and next seasons, it's almost fall, y'all ... a time when little rodents, eagle's prey, begin to build their nests and move into our vehicles.

Mice are the antithesis of eagles—in that they lack beauty, strength, power, and the ability to soar. But because of their size and wily ways, they are able to manipulate themselves through the smallest of holes, build clever nests, hoard all the things, chew until their hearts are content, and die a stinky death—making a different sort of lasting impression.

With autumn and chillier temps right around the corner, these little freeloaders are likely to take up residence in many places they are not invited into for shelter, warmth, food, and comfort—especially our vehicles. Just think, you might have an UBER (Uninvited Big Eared Rodent) passenger right now and not even know it!

UBER MAYHEM

Being in the automotive repair industry, I have seen things and heard of problems caused by UBERs that would blow your mind.

Perhaps the most often seen and popular findings are mouse nests—in every possible location you can think of. But for some reason, they have a real fondness for making their beds on top of filters. Do you suppose it's because the accordion base offers extra comfort? Or do you think they have a shareable spirit and want their smells to be our smells and cabin air filter nests accomplish this? As comfortable and generous as they may want to be, however, clogged filters can lead to all sorts of problems for you and your vehicle.

Up next—UBERs have a terrible hoarding problem and your vehicle may just be their storage solution. Do you think they look around to decide where they might

stuff their belongings for the easiest future access? Or maybe they consider what sorts of things they want to store and find the perfect size compartment? No matter, we have seen everything from leaves and other small objects in the nooks and crannies of cars to an acorn-filled tailpipe of a 1962 MG. And since mice aren't tidy in their storage endeavors, there is likely a trail of dropped debris (and poop!) in all sorts of places that will need to be cleaned out—possibly requiring the disassembly of your dash.

Plug your nose and try not to gag for our third potential problem. A dead mouse is a stinky mouse—if you've smelled one before you'll not likely ever forget the stench. Though a mouse might get stuck and die before it's able to get back out, the most common place dead UBERs are found is in the blower motor. I wonder if they think they are at the State Fair of mouse-world, but then something tragic happens—the vehicle starts up and the ride didn't go as hoped. It's dreadful for the mouse, your nasal passages, and your pocketbook.

Lastly, causing the most extensive and expensive damage is the havoc UBERs wreak on the wiring in our vehicle. Mice have sixteen teeth with front incisors that never stop growing. They just love to chew! Do you suppose chewing is so enjoyable because it soothes their teeth as they grow? Might they do it to sharpen their teeth? Or is it simply a natural instinct to keep them at a manageable length since they are always growing? No matter the reason, the outcome is a reason for alarm. When they chew wires in your vehicle, the damage they cause can cost thousands of dollars to fix.

STOP THE MADNESS

Perhaps the best way to avoid the cost of damage mice can cause is to prepare and be rodent aware with these 4 S's.

Stay clean. Here's the deal, UBERs eat—similar to "UBER eats" in our world, mice are always looking for an easy meal to consume and they aren't picky. If you have food—even just crumbs in your vehicle, they are likely to find it. If you eat in your vehicle, get rid of the trash and vacuum often.

Seal entry points. Roll up your windows. And if you are storing your vehicle for any length of time, cover the muffler and air intake with tape. Just don't forget to remove it when you are ready to drive again.

Set traps. You can always try traps along the walls of your garage to entice mice away from your vehicle. Or call your local pest control center for professional help.

Service regularly. When your mechanic performs regular maintenance on your vehicle, they will perform inspections and check filters—possibly alerting you to a problem before you are aware of one.

According to Solomon in Ecclesiastes 3, there's a right time for everything. Besides there being a right time for letting go, he says there is "a right time to destroy and another to construct". I wonder, could we use this advice in an UBER application? If we do our best to be UBER-free, our vehicles and wallets won't be "destroyed" by the problems UBERs "construct".

Perhaps this is a silly analogy—but I wonder, might more silliness and laughter be added to my next season of life? Solomon also tells us that there is "a right time to cry and another to laugh".

I've done the crying. And I'm sure there will be more moments of tears in the now quietness of my nest. But I also know there will be great joy in life—especially in the times when my eaglets return home.

I've written about eagles before in reference to my dad, my church, and our country. And now, as my last eaglet has flown out of my nest, is it a coincidence that she is now a UNW eagle? I think not! And I am grateful for the connection this strong and powerful bird has interwoven throughout my life as a symbol of remembrance and so much good.

As we fall into this next season of autumn, and if you are like me, of life, let us be like the eagle. May we build our magnificent nests with "branches and sticks" of wisdom from God, make the insides softer as we grow in the ways of Jesus, lovingly provide for our children as they continue to seek their way in the world, and rest in the peace of knowing that the Lord will strengthen, guide, provide, and be with us as we soar.



"We care for people and fix cars!"

