

## **It's Just a House**

This evening, a little past sunset, I decided to walk through the house one last time. Tomorrow our old house will belong to someone else, and I likely will never step inside again -- so one last look shouldn't hurt. After all, it's only a house... brick and wood and shingles and windows... just another building.

I entered the front door, as I had done many thousands of times before. We lived here for thirty years. Our little family got its start in this house -- and three children were raised to adulthood here. I wondered to myself how many times I had opened the screen door and then unlocked and opened the wooden front door. Such a trivial thing, entering a front door.

I remember many times walking up to that front door after a long day at work and a nerve-racking 45 minute commute home. As I reached for the doorknob, I could hear the sounds of young children talking, screaming, or giggling... I could hear the sound of music playing. As I opened the door, many times I would be greeted by the wonderful aroma of a home-cooked meal. Yes, it is just a door -- a flat piece of wood with hinges, a knob, and a latch... and construction-wise this door is nothing special. But this is the door I entered -- every day -- to see the people closest to my heart.

I walked from room to room. I could almost hear the voices and sounds of family all around -- and not just from one scene -- from thousands of them and all at once! How many times did I hear one of our children yell, "Daddy!" or "Mama!?" How many times did the pitter-patter of little feet bound up and down that hallway?

I walked into the kitchen -- how many delicious meals were prepared here over 30 years? "Y'all go wash up, supper is ready!" How many times did we open those cabinets looking for things? Just everyday life... for 30 years. It boggles the mind!

I slowly walk down the hallway to the bedrooms, and one by one I flip on the lights and pause for a moment. This is our daughter's room... I remember her sleeping there right after we brought her home from the hospital! It was her room throughout her growing up years -- and even during the time she was in college (when she would come home). I go to the boys' bedroom. When they were young, they shared a bedroom. I can almost hear some of the conversations we had... the silly bedtime stories... their prayers. I remember how messy their rooms were oftentimes during those years -- how I often wished they were neater! Now they are completely empty... and quiet.

I turn to what was my own bedroom for thirty years. The memories flood my mind. "It's just a room," I say to myself, "and it's just a house." Tears begin to well in my eyes, and I half-laugh and half-cry as I think about these bedrooms and all the life that happened between these walls. I laugh because of the goodness of the memories, the blessings, the happiness -- and I'm truly thankful for every moment of it. I cry because of the passage of time, the changing of life, and the moments gone forever -- now only memories.

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I turn off the bedroom lights and walk back down the hallway towards the front door. It's time to go now. As I approach the door, I feel a 5-year old boy tugging on my shirt tail. I look down and can almost hear him say, "Daddy, let's go outside and throw a baseball!" I smile, and in my mind I pat the little memory on his curly, blonde head, and continue to the door.

One last look, and I close and lock the door behind me. It is now dark outside -- but the steps and sidewalk are quite familiar. "It's just a house," I say to myself through a tearful smile.

And it's time for me to leave now.

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