



A Time to Fly

There was once a Mother Bird who fashioned a nest with love and sat there to keep her eggs warm. Through sleet and rain and snow she stayed, snugly sitting on them for protection, giving them all of her warmth.

by CHRIS FABRY



ONE DAY, MOTHER BIRD felt movement beneath her, and the shells jiggled, and she grew excited to see her babies come into the world. She had wondered what they might look like, if they would have dark feathers like her or if one of them might be a slightly different color. She determined, before they were hatched, that she would love each with all the love and care she could give, for this is the love of a mother.

High in her nest, she watched as one by one the eggs cracked. Little beaks peeked through, and wet feathers and wings struggled to break free. All but one egg hatched, and as she fed the little birds, she sat on the last egg to keep it warm, hoping there might be life inside. This was the longest wait, and she became concerned that something might be wrong and that all her efforts might be wasted.

Then, she felt movement. The egg cracked. A tiny beak poked through the shell. And there before her was the last hatchling, her Baby Bird, and she knew this would be the one most difficult to release to the world.

She filled hungry mouths each day, and the little birds made noises and jostled each other and grew stronger. Their tussling moved the Baby Bird, and she positioned herself between them so her baby would not be hurt.

Mother Bird smiled and knew one by one her hatchlings would fly, and that they did. When each was ready, it left the nest and flew away, and this made her sad but at the same time happy that she had done her job well and had given them the desire to fly.

But when she looked at the tiniest bird which had come from the last egg, her baby, she couldn't push the sadness away. She wanted to keep him warm, protect him, feed him, and cherish him. She wanted him close and safe. What could it hurt for him to stay a bit longer?

What could it hurt to love him one more day?

But the longer he stayed, the longer he snuggled close by her, the more troubled she became. She should have felt joy at his presence, but instead there came a stirring, a jostling inside her she could not ignore any more than when the eggs were beginning to hatch. She realized she wanted to keep him close to her, not for his good but for hers. And she knew this was not the best. It was not the way. Feeding him and keeping him warm looked like love and felt like love, but all her good intentions were actually making him depend on her. She was holding him back from being all he was created to be.

Gently, she nudged him away.

"I'm cold," Baby Bird said.

"You'll be all right," she said.

"I'm hungry," Baby Bird said.

"Yes, and there's plenty to eat that's been provided. Fly down, and you'll find food."

"I might fall."

"Not if you spread your wings," she said.

Mother Bird watched her baby walk to the edge of the nest, flapping his tiny wings, and the old feeling came again. She wanted to keep him one more day, feed him one more time, keep him safe from all of the dangers in the world. But she couldn't, because she loved him.



"I don't want to go," Baby Bird said.

"I know. But it's for your best."

"I'm scared," he said.

She looked at him with all the love in her heart. "Truth be told, I'm scared too. But this is how God has ordered things. This is your time to fly."

"You don't love me," Baby Bird said. He turned away from her.

Her heart broke at that moment. But she summoned the courage to tell him the truth — and in so doing, told herself the truth. "It's because I love you that I'm doing this."

It felt mean and cruel to push him to the edge. But she did it anyway. She nudged him farther and farther until he lighted on a twig that hung precariously over the vast expanse of the forest.

"It's very far to the ground," he said, his voice trembling.

"Yes, it is," she said with all the resolve and faith she could muster. "But look up and see how big the sky is."

"I'm scared," he said.



"Can you trust the one who loves you most?" Mother Bird said.

With sad but determined eyes, Baby Bird said, "I will."

She nudged him again, and he teetered on the twig and flapped his wings to give balance. It looked like he would fall any minute.

"When you're ready," she whispered.

"I think I'm ready."

He looked back once more, and she tried not to show her fear, her concern.

"I love you," she said.

And with wings spread, Baby Bird took flight. He dipped for a moment and went below the nest, and Mother Bird's heart sank. But when she peeked over the edge, she saw he had caught the wind and was rising and soon soaring above the trees.

For a moment, only a moment, she saw him gliding past her. "See how high I can fly, Mother?"

"I see," she said, wiping a tear from her eyes.

And then he was gone. And it was just as God had ordered. And it was the most terribly wonderful moment of her life.

Many seasons passed, and many eggs hatched. And Mother Bird grew older and tired. She rarely ventured from the nest because her wings were weak. She wondered about all of her hatchlings. And her mind wandered back to the day when her Baby Bird, dearly loved and cherished, had leapt from the nest and soared.

That Baby Bird had grown strong and tall, and one day he flew back to the nest. When he saw his mother had grown older and weary, he landed beside her and snuggled close.

"You're cold, Mother," he said.

She shivered. "Yes, but it feels so warm next to you."

"Are you hungry?"

"No," she said, her voice only a whisper.

"I think it's time for me to go."

"Go where, Mother? You can't fly without strength in your wings. It's very far to the ground."

"Yes, it is," she said. "But do you see how big the sky is? Do you know the One who made all this?"

It was just as God had ordered. And it was the most terribly wonderful moment of her life.

"Yes, He is the One who loves us most," he said. "And I have tried hard to trust Him with everything. But I don't know if I can let you go."

Mother Bird took a labored breath. There was a light in her eyes instead of sadness. And

a resolve rose within her, like the jostling of an unbroken egg.

"This is how God has ordered things," she said.

"He brought you back to me in time for me to tell you how much I love you."

"No, I've always known that, Mother. He brought me back to you so that I could tell you how much you mean to me. And I want to hold you here and keep you warm and never let go."

"And if you know that, you also know it is best for me if you let me go."

He looked down at her with a sadness that broke her heart all over again. And then he nodded.

"When you're ready," he said.

"I think I'm ready," she said.

He looked at her once again and tried not to show his fear. "I love you," he whispered.

And Mother Bird folded her wings and took flight, there in the nest she had fashioned for her eggs, cradled under the wing of the One who loved her most. ☼

Note: Find the article at lifeway.com/matureliving.

CHRIS FABRY's latest novel is *Under a Cloudless Sky*. He wrote the best-selling *War Room* novelization. His novels have won three Christy Awards and an ECPA Christian Book Award. You can hear Chris daily on *Chris Fabry Live on Moody Radio*. Find him at ChrisFabry.com.

