
TEENS ARE AMAZING

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When my wife and I had four children in four and a half years, some thought we had taken God’s instruction to “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth...” a little too literally. “You don’t need to do it all by yourself”, a friend remarked.

Scanning photos of those yester-years sheds light on the strange looks our family received when in public -- our children were remarkably similar in size, appearance and energy. The furtive glances we received generally fell into one of three categories: admiration, shock or pity.

Admiring individuals typically grew up in large families or desired such for themselves. Memories and encouragement would be shared.

The shocked would simply stare, then ask questions like, “Are any of them twins?” or “How much is your monthly diaper bill?”

Pitying people were marked by frowns and the shaking of heads. Their thoughts were obvious: “Someone really needs to inform these poor hillbillies of birth control options.”

Today, 18.5 years into the parental journey, I look at our four teenagers and wouldn’t change a thing regarding our family choices.

Last Friday evening my wife and I had just settled into bed when the rumble of the garage door announced the arrival of our four amigos, who had been at our community youth group. One by one, they traipsed into the room and plopped onto our bed. Stories from the evening spilled forth, punctuated by frequent questions, gut-wrenching laughter and good-natured ribbing. And somewhere in the middle of this unscripted two-hour tangle of legs and arms and hearts, this father experienced a nearly-overwhelming sense of gratitude for these four amazing gifts from God.

Statistics say it costs approximately \$250, 000 to raise a child to the age of 18 -- that's a million bucks that could have been in our bank account. But even money comes with a cost; and for me, the price of that million dollars is simply unreasonable. When I compare that many zeroes to these four remarkable siblings, my kids win hands-down.

You see, my banker will not invade my bed with tales of personal growth and amazing adventures (he better not). RRSP specialists will not walk with me through life, sit by my side when I am old and one day choose my coffin. My accountant is a nice guy but will probably never laugh with me as he rubs my balding head (I wish my daughters would stop doing that).

Now before you think me completely delusional, let me state that my teens are not perfect. I am inundated by daily reminders of this fact: dents in the van, damage to the garage door, loud music, smelly socks and remote-control wars. However, when I consider the big picture, the joy is Herculean and the challenges minuscule.

King Solomon declared that "Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him", and I couldn't agree more.

My bank account may hover near the break-even point, but my personal wealth soars. It's a bull market in our household and somebody shot the bear – there's no room for pessimism in the midst of laughter and stories and lavish love. We'll pray through the challenges, dance in the rain and discover God's deep rest in the midst of questions and pain.

We are however, considering the purchase of a bigger bed.