

I said "I Love You" Before the First Date (And Other Fun Facts About My Marriage)

As of May 30th, my wife Kayla and I have been married for two whole years! Look at the big brains on us! In lieu of a sappy Facebook post, I decided to share 24 of the most interesting facts about our marriage, one for each month we've been married..

In March 2014 Kayla was living in Nashville. I was living in Chicago. On March 25th, I asked her out, telling her I was coming to Nashville for Spring Break anyway (I wasn't). Our first date was to be April 13th. In the meantime, we talked every day through texting, phone and Facetime. By the time April 13th rolled around I knew she was the one I wanted to marry. Before the date I met her on campus and we sat on a swing and I told her that I loved her. I'm sure people thought (and think) that this was crazy. But she didn't run away and she married me anyway.

While we dated and were engaged she lived in Tennessee and I in Chicago. She is from Sesser, IL and I am from Tookeydoo, South Carolina. There was a stretch of five weekends where we were together but in five different places. At one point during that stretch we walked into a Target and I thought, "I have no idea what city I am in right now."

Kayla and I were long distance from March 25, 2014 until May 7, 2015. In that time we traveled 40,000 miles to see each

other via car, plane and train.

Within the span of 15 months in 2014 to 2015, Kayla finished getting licensed to teach in Tennessee, started dating me, performed several shows as Maria in a production of *The Sound of Music*, ran a half-marathon, graduated college in Nashville, got a teaching job in Hendersonville, moved to Hendersonville, started her first teaching job, got engaged to me, planned a wedding, applied and took new tests to be licensed to teach in Illinois, resigned her job in Hendersonville, got married in Sesser, moved to my small apartment in Chicago, joined a new church, moved into a bigger apartment with me in Chicago, got a teaching job in Chicago and started that job.

I am 14 years older than Kayla. I am one of the youngest grandchildren on either side of my family. She is one of the oldest. As a result I have a first cousin that is 54 and she has a first cousin that is 8.

We got engaged on Saturday night, November 1, 2014. That night USC played Tennessee in football. Two of my brothers were at the game and could not hear me when I called to tell them I was engaged because the stadium is so loud. The Gamecocks blew a 14 point lead in the last few minutes and lost. (Not that I associate that game with my engagement or anything.)

After 3 years of being together my wife knows all the random phrases I will say out loud and she often will say them before me when she knows I am about to say them. For example, if someone mentions chicken wings, she knows I will say, "TOMMY LIKEY, TOMMY WANT WINGY" from the movie *Tommyboy*.

During our wedding and reception there were several subtle references to *Seinfeld* and *Harry Potter*. We did not want to distract from the reverence of the ceremony by making them overt but true fans knew them when they saw or heard them.

Kayla and I do not celebrate Valentine's Day but instead celebrate several of our anniversaries that are significant to us (the day we got engaged, first date, etc.). Included is March 6th because it was a date before we got together where I asked her a personal question over Facebook PM and her answer was so transparent and spiritually deep I said, "I have to ask her out." Only took me 19 days to do it.

In two years I probably have done the majority of the cooking but she has absolutely done the majority of the bug killing.

For her first birthday after we got together I gave my wife a Belle tiara and recreated the scene in *The Big Bang Theory* where Sheldon gives Amy a tiara to make up for being selfish.

I was so old when I got married that a man in my church, who had prayed for years for it to happen, gave Kayla a hug the first time he met her. I've never seen him hug anyone else in 15 years of knowing him.

During our first year of being married I was taking Kayla to school and a man with mental health problems jumped in our car

when we stopped at a stop sign. He wanted me to take him somewhere but I could not understand him. I kept telling him to get out and that I'd call for help but he would not so he rode the rest of the way with us to school and then got out.

My favorite random moment from early in our marriage was on Good Friday in 2016 when we were at her parents' house. I was upstairs doing something unimportant and I could hear her downstairs playing the guitar and singing Good Friday and Easter hymns in English and Spanish.

I've never beaten my wife at *Scene It Seinfeld*. But she refuses to give me a rematch of the rematch of the rematch.

If it weren't for Facebook, I am positive Kayla and I never would have gotten together. And in the words of Kramer, "That'll make you think."

I have always hated wearing jeans but my wife wanted me to wear them so she bought me some to go out on nice dates. So I would wear jeans on the nice dates and then come home and put on some comfortable khaki pants.

After a few months of marriage I put on 40 pounds and the jeans didn't fit any more. We didn't buy any new ones.

I laugh boisterously and fall on the floor quite often but the only time I've seen my wife do it was during an episode of *Parks and Rec* where Christ Pratt as Andy Dwyer ad libs a

line when Leslie is sick: "Leslie, I typed your symptoms into the thing up here, and it says you could have 'network connectivity problems'."

Marriage teaches you how self-centered you are for sure. If we are home and my wife says something from another room and I can't hear her, I get mad at her as if it is her fault. If I say something from another room and she doesn't hear me, I get mad at her as if it is her fault.

Probably the silliest fight we have had was recently when going to church and I asked if she wanted me to drop her off at the door or not, since it was a little cool outside. She said, "It's up to you," which means, "It doesn't matter". But I got mad and told her it was her decision and that I refused to decide it. But I really said that mumbling under my breath. And she asked me to speak up and so I said it very sarcastically. We both entered the church quite mad. Thankfully my wife is abnormally gracious and apologized quickly, even though it was my fault.

Speaking of mumbling, my wife's first trip to South Carolina gave her the chance to hear the Cannon men speak in our own personal garbled vernacular that only we can comprehend. My own mother can't make it out but we understand each other just fine. If you have ever heard Jeff Foxworthy talk about words in the South, you have an idea of what it sounds like: "How's ya mama an em?" "Aight." Sometimes when my dad and brother Jeremy have a conversation I'll translate for Kayla.

Occasionally, my wife will tell her story of fitness and

health by posting a picture with comments to social media after an insane 30-40 minute workout. Sometimes, if you look carefully in the background, I'll be on the couch eating a whole frozen pizza from Aldi.

I really do love my wife very much and I cannot get over how much better marriage is than I even dreamed. I am sure it will get harder (with kids, maybe?) but right now the great moments far surpass the frustrating ones.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY, KAYLA!

[REO Pays Tribute: Marie Lytle](#)

On September 18, 2007 my mother, Marie Eula Buchanan Lytle was called home to Heaven at the age of 87. We had watched Alzheimer ravage her mind and body for eight years, and it was a sweet release to see her go.

Coming up on another Mother's Day, this tribute is in memory of her, and in her honor. I owe much of the man I am today to her influence, teaching, and prayers.

I saw her kneel at the altar of the Swannanoa Free Will Baptist Church in the fall of 1961 during a powerful revival meeting that swept our church, where she wept as she repented and rededicated her life to Christ. From that day forward,

she was a changed woman. We were in church every time the door was opened, and we were not permitted to miss. She prayed, she talked about the Lord to us kids, she walked with God. I saw her more than once on her knees in her room praying for her family.

I remember in January 1967 when the first Super Bowl was being played. I begged to stay home and watch it that Sunday evening, but she was adamant in her refusal. Never mind that it was the biggest game in history in the mind of a 16 year old boy. We were going to church. You didn't miss church for anything.

Much of Mother's life and special influence revolves around music. In my mind I can still see her standing at the kitchen sink and singing. You have to understand this; she was not a good singer. She never sang a special in church; didn't even sing in the choir. But her music and her heart, above all, touched the heart of God – and it touch me deeply.

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The first song I can distinctly remember Mother singing was "You Are My Sunshine," a very popular tune in the 1950s. The first Christian song I recall was the lovely "How Beautiful Heaven Must Be." I suppose that was around 1956 or 1957.

*We read of a place that's called Heaven
It's made for the pure and the free
These truths in God's word we are given
How beautiful Heaven must be.*

*How beautiful Heaven must be
Sweet home of the happy and free
Fair haven of rest for the weary
How beautiful Heaven must be*

Mother loved to sing "Is Not This The Land of Beulah?" Number 27 in the old Baptist Hymnal. She would sing it with strong

emotion, especially the second verse. It might have been her testimony:

*I can see far down the mountain where I wandered weary years
Often hindered on my journey by the ghosts of doubts and fears
Broken vows and disappointments, thickly sprinkled on my way
But the Spirit led unerring to the land I hold today.*

I have to believe that it was, at least in part, her love for that song that birthed the same love in me; it has been a favorite my whole life, nearly 60 years now. In fact, I don't doubt for a moment that my love for music and song stems from my earliest recollections of how certain songs impacted her.

There was a time when I was about 10, and we had just moved to our new home in Swannanoa. I had been saved that summer in Vacation Bible School, and after we moved – probably around October or November, I crossed the little branch by our house, walked out to the woods, and sat down on a fallen tree. I started singing:

*He never said I'd have silver or gold
Yet He has promised me riches untold
He never suffered a life without care
Yet He relieves every burden I bear.*

*Sin stained the cross with the blood of my Lord
Yet He permitted it without a word
Why, tell me why, He redeemed you and me?
Love is why you and I are free.*

Life wasn't easy for Mother. She worked very hard at a local factory. My dad did not follow Christ for many years; for ten years he did not darken the door of a church, and was very bitter and angry. My parents argued frequently and there were attitudes and undercurrents in the home I never understood. Yet for the most part, we had a happy childhood.

Mother didn't drive, and so for several years until I got my driver's license, we were dependent on folks in our church for

rides to church on Sundays and Wednesdays, revival meetings, and special activities. Several families, including a couple of Mom's best friends, were so good to come and pick us up, and there were four of us! Through the years, we rarely missed a service. Mother was determined that we be at God's house, hearing the Word preached and taught, and singing His praises. She loved the old hymns and she loved gospel music, and as a result, so did I.

My dad came to the Lord in 1971, and for the last decade of his life – he died in 1981 – he, too, was faithful to church.

By then, I had finished Bible College, gotten married, and began preparing for the mission field. Judy and I, along with baby Michael, said goodbye to my parents in Asheville, North Carolina as we boarded a plane to fly to Costa Rica to begin Spanish language school in August 1976. Standing there as the flight was announced, and seeing Mother's tears flow as she kept hugging Michael, Judy, and me is a powerful memory. Also powerful is the memory of my parents and sister coming to Panama to visit us, and our pride and joy in introducing them to the country that had become our home.

After my dad passed away in 1981, Mother lived for 26 more years. Church attendance, ministry (especially to nursery age kids), and caring for family remained her heartbeat. As her mind began to deteriorate in the late 1990s, followed by full-blown Alzheimer's in the early 2000s, life changed for her.

She always enjoyed music, though, up until the final couple of years. My brother would go see her in the nursing home every day, and took a CD of praise and worship music for her to hear. We gave her a Gaither Homecoming CD.

The final two years of her life, Mother was totally unresponsive. She didn't know us, she couldn't speak, and her body was twisted and drawn up as she simply lay there on the nursing home bed. We had prayed many times that the Lord would take her home, yet we didn't know it was imminent on September 15, 2007, the last time we saw her. I was alone with her,

speaking softly, and just watching her, when the idea occurred to me that I would sing to her.

Undoubtedly her favorite song, at least for the last 25 years of her life, was Squire Parson's classic "Sweet Beulah Land." Now I'm not a singer at all, and my best singing is done in the shower or in the car with no one else around. But I began to sing:

*I'm kind of homesick for a country
To which I've never been before
No sad goodbyes will there be spoken
And time won't matter any more.*

*Beulah land, I'm longing for you
And some sweet day on thee I'll stand
There my home will be eternal
Beulah land, sweet Beulah land*

Would you believe it? My mother, totally unresponsive for two years, lying in bed like a vegetable, began to respond to the song! While I couldn't understand the words she spoke – it was more like mumbling – it was evident it had touched her and that she was trying to sing along. That was a precious moment.

Two days later my brother called to say that she was gone.

Happy Mother's Day to my precious mother. Thank you for your godly influence.



The Best Dad in the World's Blog

What a week! I'm not one to pat myself on the back or anything, but my parenting game was totally on point this week. Just knocked it out of the park time and time again. It's weeks like this that make me realize how amazing my parenting skills are and how important I am to the lives of my kids. Frankly, without me, I'm not sure there would be any hope for those little monsters!

I don't really want to take the time to write down every single thing that happened this week, though, it might be wise to do so in case others want to learn from my sterling example down the road. I'll limit myself to a few classic examples of what I call "Parenting Par Excellence."

On Monday, the boys and I were sitting down to watch a TV show while eating our supper. (We like to spend as much time as possible watching television together because it really helps us bond. It is much more productive and beneficial than talking, I know that much at least!) One of my boys, I'll save him the embarrassment by not naming him, was acting a little bratty. He didn't want to watch the same show as the rest of us. He even got a little smart-mouthed with me about it. I get it; there is a time and place for being a smart-aleck. Sometimes the situation calls for it. It's usually not cool to be a smart-aleck to your dad though, so I did what every great father before me has done: I unleashed a torrent of sarcasm and smart-aleckness that broke him down and put him in his place for good. He was all teary-eyed and distant the rest of the day, but that's actually a good thing because it shows that he learned his lesson. He was well and truly humbled.

Later in the week, on a spectacularly beautiful day, the boys kept begging me to go outside and play with them. They wanted

me to throw the football to them or something. I usually don't mind doing this with them as we usually have a pretty good time. There was one problem: I was in the middle of watching a movie on Netflix and I really didn't want to have to stop and try to pick it up later. My rule in these situations is pretty simple – kids need to learn that most of the time what they want to do is much less important than what their parents want to do. So much so as to render their wants, needs, and desires irrelevant. It's good for them to be told "no", even in situations when there really isn't a good reason for it. Granted, I had a really good reason this time (movie!), but the rule still applies. They were sad and disappointed but that is good for them in the long run. One of my main jobs as a parent is to teach them about life, and we all know that life is full of disappointments. So, I try to disappoint them as often as I possibly can. It is for their own good.

Well, that's about all I have time to write today. I could go on and on, but honestly, I would much rather get back to scrolling through Twitter and Facebook. A healthy social engagement is incredibly beneficial in these troubled times. I like to have my finger on the pulse of society. Plus, I need some "me" time today after having spent a week pouring my heart and soul into my kids.

Stay blessed!

About the Best Dad in the World:

*On December 1, 2016, Phillip Lytle was honored with the prestigious "Best Dad in the World" award by the preeminent parenting organization – the **Consortium Rewarding Amazing Parenting**. Each year, the winner receives a plaque, a not-so-modest financial prize, and a platform to share their mastery of parenting. This blog is that platform. We hope you enjoy the wisdom contained herein.*

REO Pays Tribute: Leeman Underwood

Editor's Note: We believe it is good and right to honor the men and women who have inspired, encouraged, and challenged us throughout our lives. REO Pays Tribute will be our ongoing attempt to do just that. We hope that our meager words will honor those to whom honor is due.

Leeman Underwood by Steve Lytle

It was probably 1972, the year Judy and I married, when I met Leeman Underwood, but I had heard about him before then. His daughter Gail was his oldest child and she was Judy's cousin and best friend growing up. She was a senior at Free Will Baptist Bible College (Welch) when we were freshmen.

Leeman was born in Flat River (Park Hills), Missouri, but grew up in Fredericktown, Missouri, the son of Vester and Edith Underwood. He came to know Christ as a young man, and grew up in Copper Mines Free Will Baptist Church. Born in 1923, he joined the army and fought in World War II. His sister Lillian, two years younger, finished his 12th grade work in 1942 so that he could graduate from high school with his class.

When he returned from the war, Leeman married Laura Bayless, from Knob Lick, MO. They settled down in Fredericktown, where Leeman was employed in the lead mines and where they had four children: Gail, Greg, Sue, and Pam. He was ordained as a

deacon at the Copper Mines Church. He and Judy's mom frequently sang specials at church; he had a beautiful tenor voice, and she sang a strong alto.

When the mines began to close in the late 1950s, Leeman moved his family to East St. Louis, Illinois for a year and worked there. When he heard of jobs in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, he and Laura decided to move the family there, though it was a long way from southeast Missouri. They went to Oak Ridge in 1959, and began working at one of the nuclear energy plants in Oak Ridge, and worked there until his retirement. They moved into their house on Lancaster in 1965, and he has lived there ever since.

Leeman, Laura, and the children attended the First Free Will Baptist Church in Oak Ridge, where he was elected as a deacon. They faithfully served there for over 50 years.

Leeman loved to travel. They frequently went back "home" to Missouri to visit his old home church, and his family and friends. He always enjoyed returning for his high school reunion. Some of his family went with him in 2016. He was one of two attending from the class of 1942. Even closer to home in Oak Ridge, he goes out on Saturdays with his daughter Sue for long drives to enjoy the beauty of the mountains. Cades Cove is still a favorite destination of his, to see the mountain vistas, and the wildlife there. On more than one occasion, Leeman and Laura would travel to be with Judy and me for special missions services, and were faithful to support and pray for our ministry through the years.

Leeman was an extraordinary ordinary man. Quiet, mild mannered, kind, he loved his Lord and his church. He loved his family; I don't know if I've seen anyone else who loved his kids and grandchildren any more than Leeman did. There were pictures of them all over the house, and it seemed like every time we went to visit, some of the grandkids were always there. They loved hanging out with Grandma and Grandpa.

Judy and I visited the Underwoods numerous times over the years. We stayed in their home frequently when traveling for International Missions to visit churches in Missouri, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

The oldest daughter, Gail, married a preacher and became a pastor's wife. She died of cancer in 1995 while just in her forties. We were in Panama and couldn't come back for the funeral. Shortly afterwards, we came home for our stateside assignment and went to see Leeman and Laura. I remember spending time with them, talking about Gail, and watching some of the early Gaither Homecoming Videos, hearing songs about Heaven and our hope in Christ. We shed quite a few tears on those occasions, but they were tears of hope and joy. Gail's death was very hard on Leeman and Laura, but God gave grace and life went on.

In recent years, time has brought many changes to Leeman and the Underwood family. We were privileged to attend their 50th wedding anniversary in 1996. Aunt Laura passed away in 2011. Leeman still lives in his own house, but his youngest daughter, Pam and her husband Butch, live with him, and provide care and companionship. He has chronic beryllium disease, caused by exposure to beryllium while working as a machinist in the Oak Ridge factory for so many years, and taking the small particles into his lungs. More recently, he began to experience kidney failure, and was actually on dialysis for eight months some years back, but miraculously was able to come off of this treatment for several years. Now it seems to have come back.

On his good days, he sits in the living room watching old westerns on TV and enjoying his company – family, friends, and people from his church.

It is a blessing, and an honor for me to pay tribute to Leeman Underwood. A true man of God, and one of the kindest, most hospitable men I have ever known.

I have said that Leeman was a good singer. Perhaps his best known song was "I Thirst," by Beverly Lowry. I only know he sang it from the heart, as a testimony, and he sang it well.

*One day I came to Him, I was so thirsty
I asked for water, my throat was so dry
He gave me water that I have never dreamed of
But for this water, my Lord had to die*

*He said, "I thirst, " yet He made the rivers
He said, "I thirst, " yet He made the sea
"I thirst, " said the King of the Ages
In His great thirst, He brought water to me
Now there's a river that flows as clear as crystal
It comes from God's throne above
And like a river, it wells up inside me
Bringing mercy, and life-giving love*

*He said, "I thirst, " yet He made the rivers
He said, "I thirst, " yet He made the sea
"I thirst," said the King of the Ages
In His great thirst, He brought water to me.[1. I Thirst, by
Bev Lowry, copyright 1993.]*



Leeman Underwood holding his great-granddaughter.

The Astonishing Tales of Middle Of The Night Guy

"I never get enough sleep. I stay up late at night, because I'm Night Guy. Night Guy wants to stay up late. 'What about getting up after five hours sleep?' Oh, that's Morning Guy's problem. That's not my problem, I'm Night Guy. I stay up as late as I want. So you get up in the morning, the alarm [rings], you're exhausted, groggy... Oh, I hate that Night Guy! See, Night Guy always messes up Morning Guy. There's nothing

Morning Guy can do."

(Jerry Seinfeld)

I really do want to love my wife. I struggle with selfishness as much as the next guy, but in my right mind I know that I need to serve her and put her first. I fail plenty, but most days I at least make an effort. I'll get her water when she's working out, go warm up the car when it's cold and rub her feet after a long day.

That's during the day. Basically, between 6 AM and midnight.

Something strange happens when we are in bed, though. Middle Of The Night Guy shows up.

Middle Of The Night Guy is not selfless. He does not serve. He doesn't think of others before himself. To be frank, Middle Of The Night Guy is a complete jerk.

Middle Of The Night Guy will throw elbows for bed space. Middle Of The Night Guy will take the covers without hesitation. One time Middle of the Night Guy repeatedly kicked his wife for invading his side of the bed. (Middle Of The Night Guy's wife wants the record to show it was a small bed.)

Rest Of The Day Guy, who is in control of the things I talked about in the first paragraph, knows Middle Of The Night Guy exists. But he can't do much about him. Sometimes, he will ask his wife if she remembers what Middle Of The Night Guy did the night before. She always does.

Rest Of The Day Guy rejoices when he and his wife travel and they get a king bed. He sometimes will jump on it and roll around and enjoy all the space. Because he knows Middle of the Night Guy will come calling.

Rest of the Day Guy and Middle Of The Night Guy both do not like being touched. Their wife loves it. So Rest Of The Day

Guy will sacrifice to make his wife happy. He will let her lean up against him while she works and hold her hand if she wants. Not Middle Of The Night Guy. If his wife tries to come cuddle at 3 AM, he will freak out, grimace, roll over until he is squeezed on the last 6 inches of space on the bed and make himself as thin as he can. The discomfort of this and risk of rolling off the bed are worth it to Middle Of The Night Guy. Touching is not an option. If his plan to not be touched is violated, the kicks and the shoves ensue. Don't touch Middle Of The Night Guy.

Rest Of The Day Guy hates that Middle Of The Night Guy is this way and he'd love to punch Middle Of The Night Guy in the face. But he better be careful; Middle of the Night Guy has more fighting experience.

The only way Rest Of The Day Guy has a chance is if he becomes Eating My Potbelly Cookie Guy. Then he will be ready to fight to the death.

Five Responses to Common Pro-Choice Arguments

From its inception, Rambling Ever On has advocated graceful discourse and nuanced conversation. We believe that discussions filled with attacks, oversimplifications, and emotional appeals do little to change minds or hearts.

With that said, there are some areas where there is little

room for nuance. While the overall conversation about abortion is complex and multifaceted, at its root, the moral implication is very simple: abortion is murder. We can dress it up in any number of ways, but there is no getting around the fact that aborting a baby ends a life.

The [March For Life](#) is taking place today in Washington D.C. as well as in cities all over the country. We stand with those that march. Here are Five Responses To Common Pro-Choice Arguments:

Argument Number One: “Women should be in charge of their own bodies.”

Response: Abortion takes an innocent, defenseless life.

Argument Number Two: “Anti-Abortion legislation doesn’t curb abortion, but encouraging safe sex does.”

Response: Abortion takes an innocent, defenseless life.

Argument Number Three: “Abortion keeps unwanted pregnancies from bringing children into a world of horrible circumstances. There are already not enough people adopting and too many children in foster care.”

Response: Abortion takes an innocent, defenseless life.

Argument Number Four: “There is a practical difference between a ‘fetus’ and a ‘baby’.”

Response: Abortion takes an innocent, defenseless life.

Argument Number Five: "Abortion is a safe, legal and often inexpensive procedure in the United States."

Response: Abortion takes an innocent, defenseless life.

Again, it is not our aim to be pedantic, condescending or simplistic. And we certainly do not wish to ungraciously hype abortion as an unforgivable sin. It's not. This is to communicate that we do not believe any of these arguments for abortion overrule the taking of an innocent defenseless life. We are followers of the Christian God. As far back as we have recorded writings, our God's followers have believed strongly that God created, formed and cares for people in the womb (Psalm 71:6, 139:13-18; Job 10:10, 31:15; Isaiah 49:6). So we, along with millions of others, feel obligated to speak out against the single greatest injustice of our society in this way (Proverbs 24:10-11).

[Titans Tuesday: The Joy of Sports](#)

I watch every Tennessee Titans' game with my boys. I have three boys, ages seven to thirteen, and they all love sports. They really love the Titans. My youngest will wear the same Titans' outfit every Sunday while watching the game. My middle son will wear a Titans' jersey and his Titans' gloves. My

oldest doesn't wear anything special but pays more attention to the game than any of them.

We watched the Titans take on the Kansas City Chiefs a few days ago, as most of you probably did. My oldest was only able to watch the first half with us because he had the opportunity to attend a college basketball game. I hate it that he missed the second half, because the football he got to see was not that enjoyable. The Titans were a mess in the first half. They made multiple mistakes on offense and defense. They allowed the Chiefs to dictate the terms of the engagement. But even with too many missed opportunities, mental errors, and bad plays on the field, the Titans were still only down 17-7 going into halftime.

Then it got good.

I've [written before about controlling my emotions and reactions while watching sports with my kids.](#) In the past, I did a bad job of modeling positive behavior when my teams would lose. I made a commitment that I would work on this and the results have been mostly good. And my kids are following right along since they no longer have to watch their dad make a fool of himself yelling at the television screen every few minutes. Don't get me wrong; I still get animated. I still cheer. I still yell at the TV from time to time. But I do my best to not allow the result of the game to affect the rest of my day.

With all that said, I had a pretty loud and intense inner dialogue going on throughout the second half. I knew how important this game was for the Titans' playoff chances. I knew they were capable of playing better than they played in the first half. So when things did not go as desired, my inner idiot did a lot of yelling and venting. On the outside, I remained calm and jovial. I smiled at my boys. I joked with them. I talked about how much better this Titans' team is than in previous seasons. But inside, I was fuming mad and

frustrated.

Fortunately, for my mental well-being, the Titans did start to play better. The defense made play after play in the second half, keeping the Chiefs scoreless for the final 30 minutes of the game. The offense didn't do a lot, but when it counted most – the fourth quarter – Marcus Mariota and company did exactly what they needed to do to win the game.

What a way to win the game though! When Ryan Succop lined up to kick the game winner, I knew Andy Reid was going to call a timeout. So, I didn't get nervous at all. I did swallow a little harder when he missed that kick by a good five yards though, but I figured it could help him make the kick that counted. I sat there with my two boys. We all moved the edge of the couch. I put my arm around both of them and said, "If he doesn't make this, this was still a really fun game to watch." They nodded in agreement. Right before the kick happened, my teenage international student/daughter strolled into the room. My boys yelled for her to come watch the kick with us. She happily complied. We were ready.

The snap...

The hold...

The kick...

Good!

The scene in my house after the kick was one of joyful insanity. We were all jumping, yelling, whooping, high fiving, and hugging. There were enough smiles in the room to last us the rest of the year.[1. We got to relive all the best moments when my oldest son got home from the basketball game. He had heard they won while at the game but didn't know the particulars. We were very happy to share them with him.]

This is why we watch sports. It's for these moments. Thank you, Tennessee Titans, for giving us a season to remember. No

matter what happens in the next two weeks, this season has been a joy to experience.

Five Lies Gilmore Girls Tells You

For the record, I like the show. But it lies to you. Lies so hard. Here are five examples.

1. If you eat enormous amounts of junk food, do not cook much on your own, and hate exercising, you will still be healthy and look fabulous.

It's the life we all want, but we can't have. And please tell me there will be French fries in heaven. And coffee.

2. Your wish for your studious, "good" teenage daughter to have moments of rebellion by participating in destructive behavior has no actual effect on her decisions.

Were these longings for her teenager's rebellion due to parental boredom? Did Lorelai want to purchase the alcohol for Rory's underage drinking orgies? Was she disappointed in her daughter for striving to get into an Ivy League instead? Darn, I hate it when kids make correct choices.

3. Being a single mother with one income will lead to *talk* of not having money, but there will never be any actual financial

sacrifices.

You can eat out as much as you want, actually eat out most every meal. You can own your own very large home in the Northeast. Your daughter can buy books all the time. You can wear whatever you like and find fashionable.[1. Time agrees. [Read this](#) if you don't believe me.] Ok, so Rory didn't buy enough skirts for her private school. Lorelai insisted that was not necessary. (True. Private school skirts are indestructible.) And Lorelai had to make Rory's dress for prom. Real homemade clothes (when you're too poor to buy clothes) look nothing like Rory's designer "home-sewn" beauty. Believe me.

4. You can know all the things about all things.

Not only can you do lots of fun things and involve yourself in all the town's events, you can know everything about most everything: literature, movies, music, history, celebrity gossip, and more. There is such a wealth of knowledge, that you can have entire conversations filled with allusions. You'll end up like *The Little Match Girl* by the time you figure them all out.

5. If you do all this cool stuff, and if you are witty, and if you have a permissive parenting style, your daughter will be your best friend. Not just your best friend when she is older, wiser, and has had time to mature, but your best friend during each of the awkward stages of development, including pre-pubescence and adolescence.

I'm sure this show is how my friends pictured mothering teenage girls before they actually had a teenage girl.

Then they had a daughter. And now they're like, "Ain't no way

we are having coffee as besties. I'm 'bout to lose it on you, and you only in elementary."

And I can't even share what my friends who have middle school daughters are thinking. That's confidential. (And these friends of mine who parent daughters are great mothers. This is just venting, people. Calm down.)

So there you have it. Lies. Netflix is releasing sequels to the series—four episodes, one for each season, titled "A Year in the Life." The day after Thanksgiving, I will be curling up with sisters, eating junk food, laughing, binge watching, and listening to more lies.

It will be great.

Growing Younger

I have three boys. My oldest is an introspective and witty thirteen-years-old. My middle child is an enthusiastic and passionate eleven. And my youngest is a spirited and precocious seven-year-old. My oldest son is in eighth grade, right at the cusp of starting High School. My middle son is a Middle School student as well. My youngest is in first grade. Should that make me feel old? It doesn't. Time passes so quickly that there are days when it feels like they should still be toddlers crawling and stumbling around the house. There are other days when I am shocked to find myself rapidly approaching a robust and not-remotely-daunting forty. Even so, I don't really feel that much different than I did ten or

fifteen years ago. Wait, that is not exactly true. In some very important ways, I was a very different person fifteen years ago. Back then, I was a recent college graduate that had most things in life figured out. When I say most things, I mean just that. I was very smart. I knew a lot of stuff. I had opinions on most topics and those opinions were ironclad. I was all sorts of awesome.

This is about an accurate and biblical self-image.

And then real life happened. Marriage. A real job. Kids. All those things. What did all of that cumulative responsibility do to me? It made me realize that I don't have most of the answers. It made me realize that I am not remotely as smart as I thought and that I know far less than I envisioned. And you know what? That realization did not bother me at all. Before you start to raise objections, I am not justifying willful ignorance. Not at all. It is important to be a lifelong seeker of the truth.[1. Proverbs 4:7, 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22, Ephesians 1:17.] Lazy minds are wasted and wasteful and we should want no part of that. This isn't about ignorance, or naiveté, or anything else of the sort. This is about proper self-perception; an accurate and biblical self-image [2. Ecclesiastes 11:5, Isaiah 55:9, Romans 11:33.]. This is about hopefully taking a few haltering steps towards humility.[3. James 4:10, Proverbs 22:4, 1 Peter 5:6.] This is about knowing that I don't know everything and being willing to admit that, not only to others, but also to myself.

There are many things my kids don't understand, yet they accept my word as truth in those situations. And that is okay with them. Even my oldest son still takes me at my word and trusts the things I tell him. They fully believe that I have their best interest at heart. And I do everything in my power to earn that trust and prove my love for them.

[God] wants what is best for me at all times yet I continually “know” better and fight Him.

How much more can that be said about my relationship with God.[4. Deuteronomy 7:9, 1 Peter 5:7, Proverbs 1:33.] He wants what is best for me at all times yet I continually “know” better and fight Him. I am doing my best to get back to the faith of my childhood. Getting back to approaching God as a child, knowing that the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like children.[5. Matthew 19:14.] So, while I am getting older in physical terms, I am doing my best to get younger in the ways that truly matter.

Five Ways an Adult Can and Should Honor His or Her Aging Parent

As far as I know, there is no age limit on the biblical command to honor our parents. Throughout the Bible we see grown people showing deep respect for their parents. One fact about getting old that we all must face is getting slower both physically and mentally. This is a nasty fact of life. As adult children, it is our duty, honor and privilege, to continue to honor our parents as they face these latter years. There are five great ways that we as adults can and should show this to them. Most of these “ways” will specifically deal

with honoring aging parents with dementia.

1. Be Willing to Do Anything to Take Care of Them No Matter What – Every situation is unique. There are a seemingly limitless amount of family situations. It might simply be more practical for other siblings or family members to have a more hands-on, lead role in taking care of them than you. But if your parent or parents are in need of assistance, you do need to have a hand in deciding what to do. You and your siblings and family need to agree on what needs to be done. For my own family, the role of primary caregivers went to me and my elder sister since we are single and my brother and other sister are married and have family obligations of their own. Things may not look exactly like this for you—or not at all like this. The point is, you need to be willing to do whatever it takes to make arrangements for your aging parent to be completely cared for. This may mean massively rearranging your life to benefit theirs. It may mean arranging for their continuing care with your dying breath. Jesus did this very thing while he was dying on the cross. As he was being tortured to death, he instructed his trusted disciple, John, to take care of her as if she were his own mother (John 19:26-27). That right there is a heartbreakingly inspirational example of full commitment to do what it takes to care for a parent. And if our suffering Savior was willing to take care of his parent, shouldn't you?

The point is, you need to be willing to do whatever it takes to make arrangements for your aging parent to be completely cared for.

2. Express Your Love Frequently. Mom has been gone almost seven years and although he still has a lot to offer, my 80-year-old dad is slowing down both mentally and physically. I am convinced that one of the very best things a child can do is to shower his or her parent with love with frequent hugs,

quality time, and an abundant quantity of their own particular love language. Tap into this love language and love them with it with all of your heart. For my dad, it's hugs and acts of service. I spend all day helping my dad, so technically I have acts of service covered. But it is easy to get absorbed with my own work, though, and zone out his constant questions and repetitive statements. So really, can most of it really be considered quality time? I think not. I'm working on this. Really spend time with them and patiently listen to and answer the things they say a million times every day. They may not remember it, but again, it is your duty, honor, and privilege to actively honor your parent with abundant love until one of you dies.

3. Be Patient. This may be the most difficult thing to do consistently. The slower your parent gets both mentally and physically requires that you do a whole lot of patiently waiting. It means that you will have to repeat yourself over and over, that you will hear questions and stories over and over, that you will spend hours helping them do a simple task. And those are just some examples. There is a very, very good chance that you will frequently want to run down the road screaming and pulling out your hair. There is also a very good chance of you getting angry with them and wanting to say something mean and disrespectful. Don't. Just don't. (I'm working on this as well.) Remember, this is your parent, the one you have been commanded to honor. Plus, this is the person who raised you, who potty trained you, who wrestled with you, who playfully stuck your foot in his or her mouth when you were a baby, who helped you with your homework, who took you to doctors and dentists, who sent you through school, and a million other things. And they did this all with dedication and patience. Now it's your turn.

Remember, this is your parent, the one you have been commanded to honor.

4. Preserve Their Honor – One of the oldest stories in the Bible involves the disgrace of a child for failing—or even attempting—to preserve his father’s honor. Not long after Noah and his family came out of the ark, he started a vineyard. He got drunk from the proceeds one night and lay naked in a drunken stupor. Ham saw this sad state of his father and instead of preserving his honor, he went and joked about it with his brothers. They did the honorable thing and immediately took steps to restore it. Your parent or parents might become in a state where it will be your duty to preserve their honor in the eyes of the world. You will also need to preserve it in your own eyes. Shem and Japheth’s actions involved covering up their father’s nakedness while at the same time making sure they themselves didn’t look at it. You may be their last guardian of any dignity. There may unfortunately be times when it is not possible to save them from some indignity. Do the very best that you can for as long as you can. Guard their honor faithfully and with full commitment.

5. Let Them Have As Much Independence as Possible for as long as possible, but be aware that they are dependent. While you should be fully willing to help them with everything, it is also a good idea to give them as much independence as possible. However, it may also mean keeping a close eye on them in any of these independent activities. For instance, Dad likes to take frequent walks around town. At this point in time, his dementia isn’t so bad that he won’t remember his way home and he knows the Pleasant View area around our home pretty well. Plus, for Dad engrained habits don’t rely on memory. For these reasons we are fine with him going on these frequent walks by himself (plus I’m too lazy to go with him all the time). However, we always know what he’s doing and where he is. He also has a cellphone, which helps if he is gone a little too long and we want to make sure he’s okay. Just honor your parents by letting them make as many of their own decisions as possible for as long as possible. It may get

to the point where you will need to manage all of all their personal affairs. As long as they are capable, out of respect you should at least involve them in these things. This goes back to the patience thing, because this will often mean that the process will be a lot slower, more unnecessarily complicated, and that you will be constantly explaining to them what is going on.

Be committed to honor your own parent for the rest of yours or their lives.

This brief list is not mean to be a thorough look at the subject. As mentioned there are many, many, many different situations. In addition, dementia can get really bad. Thankfully, my dad's isn't really bad yet, but if or when it does, I need to be committed right now to honoring him no matter what. Be committed to honor your own parent for the rest of yours or their lives. You will need to be proactive about stepping in to take care of them when necessary. They aren't going to ask you to and they may not want assistance even if they need it. Be willing to help them even without getting any thanks from them for it. You do this and there will be much merrymaking throughout the lands, trees clapping their hands, and mome raths outgribbing.