



Finish Strong with Your Last Child



I became so intentional about having dinner together that I was determined to finish strong with our last son. I still remember a dinner when Craig and I were extremely exhausted after a long day. The other children had left the table and 13-year-old Cameron was lingering. I asked, “What year do you graduate from high school?” He piped up, “2018!” I still remember the look of horror between Craig and I—this was 2013—five more years, could we do it? I finished with, “Cam, it’s going to be just you and the old folks!”

Sometimes just he and I would eat dinner, right after school at 2:30, because he had lacrosse practice and then a church activity. We bought Table Talk cards and we would go through them so we could spark more conversation between us. I wish I had these character stories back then!

Once when the three of us ate together, one of the cards asked, “When was there a time you were humiliated?” Craig told a story I had never heard, when he was getting his MBA and a guest speaker who had committed fraud at a hedge fund came into the classroom, because the case was about him. Craig said the obvious question wasn’t being asked—“Did you ever feel like what you were doing

was wrong?”—so Craig asked it. The guest slammed his hand down on a desk and yelled back to Craig, “That’s the stupidest thing that anyone has ever asked me!” Craig told us how humiliated he felt in front of his whole class of 90 peers, and had no smart or witty answer to sling back at this guy, and how later he had come up with hundreds of retorts he wished he had said. When our children hear about these painful stories, they will know that we suffer, we get embarrassed, and things can be very hard for us, but also how we got through it or over it.

It was a golden family story that landed. Cameron asked a lot of questions and we had a great discussion about how people might attack you when you ask a character question, about their honesty, like this man did. Many of these dinners reinforced to me the importance of finishing strong with our youngest child and to fill his emotional and spiritual buckets like we did with our older children. Life changes so much as your family gets older and busier, but make time for dinner and listen, listen, listen to those younger children. Then tell them a character story!