Our family grows

Here’s the thing about kids: It’s absolutely impossible to imagine adding one (or another one) to the life you’ve carefully built.

Maybe it’s not that way for everybody. Maybe I’m the only one who thinks it’s a bit like finishing a 1,000-piece puzzle, stepping back to admire it for a bit, and then having somebody hand you another couple hundred pieces and expecting you to wedge them in somewhere, only there aren’t any empty spaces.

Nine-plus months ago, that’s what I thought about my life; there weren’t any empty spaces. And I’m not talking about having to get bunk beds (got ’em) or a new van (got it); I’m talking about finding room in my heart to love another kid like I’ve spent the last five years loving the three I’ve got.

It seems like a silly concern, now. But I always forget that when it comes to love, God doesn’t let your cup overflow. He simply gives you a bigger cup.

I apologize for the delay in writing this blog. Along with the holidays, I’ve been busy watching my wife change diapers and ordering my older three to do the same. (I’m kidding, mostly.)

The night before Thanksgiving, while watching “Jurassic Park” with our three kids, my beautiful, devout wife was quietly going into labor. The other four of us were oblivious to her tightly gripping the arms of the recliner as we watched a T-Rex snatch a guy clean off of the toilet. She was having secret contractions for a couple of reasons: 1.) She doesn’t like to draw attention to herself – it’s her nature – and she has a ridiculously high tolerance for pain; and 2.) She knew that if I caught her having regular, strong contractions, my nature is to COMPLETELY FREAK OUT. As soon as she was able to stand, I would have loaded her and the emergency bag into the car and been off to the hospital.

It was only when she unassumingly excused herself from the movie so that she could go lie down upstairs that I caught on. (Red flag raised: She never goes upstairs to lie down at 7 p.m. unless she's supremely ill or about to have a baby.) She immediately declined my invitation (fine, invitations) to go to the hospital and labored long and hard at home.

My job was to time the contractions. I wasn't great at this job, because apparently just counting minutes and not seconds is the wrong thing to do. Guessing and estimating also don't cut it. Luckily, my youngest son, Jacob (the 5-year-old, the cute one) was there to hold his mom's hand during her "retractions."

But, in my defense, my head was elsewhere. See, despite having nine months to prepare for this blessed occasion, we had yet to choose a name in case the doctor handed us a boy. (We had pretty much pinned down a girl's name the day before after much negotiating.)

This being the fourth labor I've gone through (not including my own – hi mom!), I've picked up a few things. With Olivia, our beautiful, overachieving 12-year-old, I learned not to speed on the way to the hospital, because the bumps in the road feel significantly worse at 90 mph than they do at 55. Also, while ice chips are soothing for a woman about to deliver a nearly 9-pound baby, shoving them in her face while she's pushing isn't advised. I also learned to answer the following question posted by most doctors to most new dads: "I can see the head. Dad, do you want to take a look?" Then, 12 years ago, with Olivia, I was caught up in the excitement and headed down to where only the doctors and nurses should be allowed. That lesson was learned the hard way, and it was a mistake I did not repeat with any subsequent children, during whose deliveries I stayed, uh, north of the border.

But here's what I learned while my wife was lying in our bed as her body excruciatingly prepared itself for the delivery of

our fourth child: No matter how much it's bothering you, between brutal contractions is not the time to pester her about the fact that a boy name has yet to be chosen. It would have been wise to fight that urge, and if God blesses us with a No. 5, it is advice I will probably heed.

Here was the problem with the boy name: I had my heart set on a girl's name and tactfully negotiated its usage. But in order to secure those rights, I surrendered my stake in the boy's name, which was down to two choices: one I liked very much and Adam. Sorry, Adams of the world. It's not that I don't like your name; it's just that I didn't want to name my son your name. I hope you understand.

Eventually (and slowly – bumps in the road hurt) we made it to the hospital. Because she is the most amazing woman I know, my wife was nearly 8 centimeters dilated by the time we got to the hospital. While she always forgoes the epidural, there was no time for pain medicine of any kind. Ice chips were only given when asked.

And despite the prayers of Olivia (the 12-year-old, the sweet one) for a sister, for the third time in a row, our amazing doctor handed my wife a baby boy. Because of course. And while I can't be certain of this, I'm pretty sure that if we had a boy's name picked out and not a girl's name, Olivia would have gotten her sister. God has a sense of humor.

So after the nine-month mystery was over and we realized another boy had joined our family, I spent a very awkward 30 seconds looking at my wife and son and thinking, "Please not Adam." (Sorry again, Adams).

And my wife said to me, "Let's go with Dominic."

And so Dominic Francis Warden was born early on Thanksgiving morning, and immediately, again, my concerns about having enough love for another child were wiped away.

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