

Me and Honey Nim have five children

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(Hwa, Captain America, KatP, Phish and Treegy)

I live in a faith community where that number doesn't even raise an eyebrow, but in the general population of our fellow sojourners on Earth, five children gets commented on.

As in, "Wow, that's a lot!"

"Really? Really? You really think so?"

"Yeah."

No hock, Sherlock. Five children is HUGE. It was between child number four and five that we finally figured out what was causing them. Someone sent me a pamphlet with some diagrams. I was gobsmacked! Sexual intercourse. Who knew?

The last two times we found out we were pregnant, we stood there looking at each other dumbfounded, looked down at the drugstore test strip again, then back at each other. Always we came to the same conclusion: the ones we already have are pretty interesting people. I'm sure this new one will also amaze us in many wonderful ways. Then we embraced and celebrated. So by way of the exact family planning science of *que será, será*, we grew to become a tribe of five children.

Those who warned us it is expensive to raise five children today, were right of course. But this size is what we are. A family is not several individuals. A family is "we." It's a big "us." "Family, family, family," as we sometimes call ourselves, makes up a large part of the definition of each of us individually. When any one of us is away for too many days, the others begin to seriously feel the lack.

But the one single fact that continues to surprise me and Honey Nim every day without fail, is how different each child (an odd word to use for people old enough to vote) is from the others. That five personalities, so diverse from one another, could come from the same two parents is astonishing and seems quite impossible.

The children contain a bit of me, some traits of her, and then this huge third other aspect of their personality that seems to have simply appeared, as though it came in through the air conditioning. No two are alike. They have characteristics I associate with the four seasons, and that have nothing to do with the time of year they were actually born. For example a child with a winter personality can be born in July or any other time. The classifications are my own, but you may recognize some of these traits in your children or in yourself.

Spring is a tempest, often the baby of the family.

Carried around in arms from birth, they can be as adorable as an internet video of sleeping puppies. Spring is also indulged and given license to be hot-tempered. Daughter Sunhwa (forever “Hwa” in the lexicon of the family family family) is age 19 now but still a Spring. If Hwa and our dog sat down to play a game of chess, there would be no rules and the game would never end. She will be a wonderful mother because she will never forget how to understand her children.

Autumn is talented and complex.

Autumn is where life and death meet amid great drama, where art and intellect make another foolish attempt to occupy the same time and space. There is a fragile intensity and brilliance there. Autumn can die young, or turn bitter in late middle age, or can live long, happily, wise and fully realized. Nobody forgets Autumn. Daughter Theresa (“Treegy” or “Tree” in the family family family), now in her mid-20s is a classic Autumn. She’s a chef in Seattle. Her motor runs hot, and only Ronnie’s sincere love can stop her train in its tracks. By the way, never trifle with a person who uses knives for a living.

Summer has the open spirit of a blue-eyed blonde.

Summer, loving life and people, is barefoot and happy to live in the woods and eat squirrels. Being a born romantic, Summer can be the best child or a parent’s worst nightmare. Never in between. Son David (“Captain America” in the family family family), of dark eyes, music and healing – lives for high ideals. Doctor Dave, the physical therapist, will re-pop the dislocated shoulders of the world. Thank God his wife keeps him organized.

Winter is easy to dismiss, to put off to one side.

That’s because what Winter offers is deeply held and hard to fathom. Everyone hopes Winter will not destroy the world. They say what they think and can leave wreckage in their wake. Speaking truth to power can cost them dearly. But Winter is fiercely loyal. Winter will stay by your side long after it’s unwise to do so. Daughter Kathy (“KatP” in the family family family), late 20s, will hold your hair back for you when you puke. She will take a bullet for you. If she doesn’t shoot you herself.

Son John (“Phish” in the family family family), early 20s, is a Winter-Autumn blend, intensely private, somewhat mysterious. However, it’s as clear as glacial melt that God is training him, pushing him through various trials with great love and attention to detail. He is a student headed for the healing professions, an ultimate frisbee athlete who loves to cook. My intuition tells me John has a hero inside him that grows year by year, and awaits only the tapping of God’s finger on his shoulder and the whisper in his ear, “I need you to go and do this for me, even at the cost of your life.” Whoever comes to occupy the position of John’s wife, will never feel un-cherished.

So where are you in the seasons of family? Try to live long if you can, and have good luck. If you do, you may be able to experience all four seasons during your journey on earth.