

Odd Things People Say to Families with Lots of Children

Several of *Intellectual Takeout*'s Alcuin Fellows come from big families – one from a family of twelve children, the other from a family of thirteen. Because of this, we recently started swapping stories about the strange things people say when they realize the size of our crews.

We get it. We're a bit of a distraction – or maybe attraction – out in public. So much so, that last year at the zoo one visitor went from taking pictures of the animals to taking pictures of our big clan. Upon noticing this, one little sibling began striking various poses, quickly ending the impromptu photoshoot. Yes, a sense of humor is needed when living in a big family.

Recognizing the need for this humor, we've compiled a list of the most unusual comments we've received over the years:

1. "Are they all yours?"
2. "Did you actually give birth to all of them?"
3. "Are they all from one dad?"
4. "How many wives does your father have?" (From a student in an ESL class.)
5. "You must be Catholic/Mormon."
6. "Is this a daycare?"
7. "Better you than me!"
8. "Did you mean to have that many kids?"

9. "You are a busy mom!"
10. "You're done, right? (Are you having any more?)"
11. "It must be the cold winters—there's nothing else to do."
12. "You know you can get that fixed, right?"
13. "You know how this is happening, don't you?"
14. "We know what you two have been doing!"
15. "Are you going to keep going until your uterus just falls out?" (Called across the church parking lot.)
16. "You wouldn't have had so many if they were strong-willed like mine."
17. "At least you have good kids."
18. "Wait until they're teenagers!"
19. "You don't pay any taxes, do you? Is that why you had so many?"
20. "How do you afford it?"
21. "You must have a big house. How big is your house? How many bathrooms do you have?"
22. "How do you feel about having so many siblings? That must be really hard on you."
23. "Do you ever even get to spend time with your parents?"
24. "From a former family doctor: 'Your family is a burden on society.'"
25. Strangers will reply, "Oh, that's great!" and then share deeply personal information about their financial situation, sex life, and birth control methods, as if we'd asked why they didn't have twelve kids (although the question never even

occurs to us).

26. From a customer at work: “Oh, your parents have twelve kids? They must be crazy—we only had three, and we didn’t want any more. That’s why I had a vasectomy a month ago, and...” (proceeds to detail the ins and outs of his recent vasectomy).

In our experience, big families are fairly accustomed to questions, remarks, and strange looks, and generally take it in stride. We know we’re a little unusual and people are often surprised and curious. When you meet us, feel free to ask away! (But please don’t tell us about your vasectomy!)

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