

The 2009 Keeping-It-Real Allison Family Christmas Letter



"You know what we call that Allison?" asked the burly farmer as he touched the ever thinning hair on top of my head and then slowly moved his hand down to grab the hair on my chin. "No," I said. "We call that rotating the crops," he laughed. Yep, I'm getting older. The signs are alarming. Got lots of hair in places it shouldn't be. I actually cut my ear shaving this year! Wouldn't stop bleeding. And the hair that should be standing guard is conspicuously MIA. Rotating the crops indeed. Ironically, one of Stacy's goals in life is to look *older*. Trust me when I say that if you want to encourage her, the next time you see her, tell her how much she's aged. She'll feel great about herself. If you REALLY want to encourage her, buy her a Starbucks gift card with a note that says, "Welcome to the AARP!" It'll make her day.

Speaking of growing old, our six kids are ages 8-18—four of whom are teenagers. Yes, we're in that season of life known as AAAAHHHHHHHH! But we wouldn't trade it for anything... except maybe cosmetic surgery to make Stacy look older. We invite you to grab a hot beverage of your choice, put on your snuggie, read our family letter, and laugh with us... or at us.

Fun for your whole family: When you put our 2009 family picture on your refrigerator this year, compare it to previous Allison family pictures on your fridge. Watch how I age over the years and try to determine which years have been more stressful than others!

For years I lived under the delusion that once Stacy and I raised a kid or two, we'd get really good at it... and the rest of our kids would be raised by better/wiser parents—thus producing a sort of Allison Kid 2.0. Here's something I didn't see coming: the younger kids get influenced by the older kids in ways that ain't always



pretty. Here's a case in point: Me to 8-year-old **Sadey** before church one night: "Sadey, no talkin' gangsta tonight at church. I mean it." Sadey to me: "Yo yo homey G." And then she did some gansta-type hand motions. YIKES! Sadey really enjoys trying to play the trumpet, piano, and having fun with her friends (including teenagers).



Libby, 11, and I share a deep bond that can be summed up in the words, "hugs and chocolate milk shakes." Like most Allisons, she has a slightly overdeveloped sense of humor... and decent timing. Last summer, after speaking one evening at a junior high camp, Josey, Libby, Sadey, and I sat by a lake and watched a majestic sunset. As we walked back to our cabin together, we found ourselves all holding hands. It was a real family Kum-ba-yah-moment. Eventually, Josey asked, "Why are we all holding hands?" Without missing a beat, Libby said, "Because we're homeschooled." We all burst out laughing. We all knew we were holding hands because it was dark and we're afraid of monsters. Of course, none of us would admit that. Libby likes to bake cookies, roller skate, and play outside with her friends.

Josey, 13, is a very interesting mix of polite quiet and quick wit. She makes you drop your guard with her polite quiet and then BOO-YAA... in comes the quick wit. While speaking at the aforementioned camp last summer, Josey challenged me to a game of carpet ball. After getting thoroughly beat by Josey, I grabbed three of the pool balls. "Look Josey," I said as I attempted to juggle the pool balls, "I should join the circus." Jo smiled and retorted, "You're already a clown." Sometimes I feel like the Rodney Dangerfield of fatherhood—I tell ya, I get no respect. Seriously though, I love that playful banter that Josey brings to our family... especially when it's directed at someone other than me. Josey enjoys serving in our church's puppet ministry, beating older sister Aubrey in games, and can't wait to get on Facebook when she turns 14.



Bill, Stacy, Emily, Billy, Aubrey, Josey, Libby, and Sadey Allison wish you and yours a merry Christmas!

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Stacy and I have noticed that **Aubrey**, 15, has an unnatural growth of sorts on her hand. After taking her to the doctor, we found out that she is suffering from cellphoneitis. This is a common malady particularly bad in teenage girls. Yes, that's right. We caved and got Aubrey a cell phone because 1) the phone was given to us, 2) she's paying for the service every month, and 3) she's starting to drive. Yes, this is teenager #3 driving. Besides being broke and exhausted, I'm losing years off my life. Oh well. Look at the bright side: my prayer life has never been better. Aubrey holds the family record for the most texts in a month. Can you say "unlimited texting plan"? She likes to drive, text (not while she's driving), and hopes to be a summer missionary with CEF this summer.

Our 17-year-old son, **Bill**, also has a strange growth of sorts—coming out of the back of his head. Concerned, I asked him, "What's that growing out of the back of your head?" He announced, "I'm growing a rat tail." I asked, "What does that make the rest of your head?" He said, "Funny dad," but I heard, "Go away old man." He has since joined a Facebook group called, you guessed it, "Rat Tails." The group only has 130 members, but I noticed that two were my kids. Is God paying me back for when I had long hair in the late 70s? Probably not. Besides, I wished I had that hair now! To be honest, I enjoy the fun-loving interactions these things create for our family. Recently I told him, "I'm gonna sneak into your room one night and snip that rat tail right off your head." "But if you do that, I'll lose my strength and die," he objected referring to the story of Sampson. "Don't you try to get all biblical on me young man," I said with a smile. Trust me when I say he's *not* worried. Both of us know I'm way too old to stay up late enough to sneak into his room and cut off his rat tail. Besides, I probably couldn't find the scissors. Ah, the blessings of masculinity. Bill plays guitar in a ska band called For the Win, plays football for the IVC Grey Ghosts, and Rugby for the Chillicothe Barbarians. But I think I can still take him. I'm meaner.



Emily, 18, is a student this year at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. Here's a phone call I often fantasize about getting from her: "Great news Dad! I just landed an on-campus job and I'll be using all my time outside of class to work—including weekends—so I can be the responsible young woman you raised me to be and pay for next semester. Dad, I just won't have time for fun and boys. I'm focusing on God, my studies, and paying my own way through college." Like I said, it's a fantasy. I called her one Friday night not long after college started and foolishly asked, "What's a college student like you doing on a Friday night?" Emily gushed, "Ben and I are going to ride the 'L' and explore Chicago tonight." My fatherly heart and head flooded with logical questions: WHO is Ben? What's an "L"? What part of Chicago? Does Ben have a gun? If so, is that a good thing or a bad thing? What's the phone number of the president of Moody? I asked, "Is that a good idea Em—a young woman from Chillicothe, IL, exploring Chicago on a Friday night with a guy

her father knows nothing about?" After a thoughtful pause, Emily asked, "Would you like to talk to him? He's right here." Boy would I. "Put him on," I said wiping the sweat off my forehead. An unfamiliar, low, testosterone-filled voice said, "Mr. Allison, sir." Good start. "Ben, if required, will you die tonight to protect my daughter?" I wasn't joking and Ben knew it. "Yes, sir," he said as confidently as he could. After a few more clear and commanding directives from me, Emily was back on the phone. After telling her to be careful yet one more time, we ended the call. I turned to Stacy and said, "I totally blew that, didn't I?" Feeling like a complete failure, I called Emily back. "Hello," she said over the clickety-clack of the "L" train in the background. "Hey, I'm sorry for overreacting about all this. I've never had a daughter away at college before. You're gonna have to be patient with me while I grow up with you." "That's OK dad," she assured me, "I forgive you." After apologizing to Ben too, I hung up and prayed... for all of us. Emily is majoring in Philosophical Theology, so let us know if you ever see a job opening like this: "Wanted—Someone who wants to change the world one deep conversation at a time—preferably over a cup of coffee. Apply here."

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