

David After Dentist: Up Close and (Really) Personal

I'm famous. By association.

Have you seen the YouTube video "David After Dentist"—you know, the one that's been viewed almost *19 million* times? Yeah, that's my nephew. I would say I taught him all he knows, but since he's now famous for being in a post-surgery stupor, I'm not sure what that says about my normal state of mind.

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Anyway, last May my then-7-year-old nephew David had to have oral surgery and was quite nervous. His mom, Tessie, also had to work. His dad (my brother) was taking him to the dentist and decided to video record moments of the day so Tessie could see how their son did.

Little David did just fine in the surgery. But you never know what you might say or do while coming out of anesthesia—and that's what started David's unintentional path to stardom. Father and son were driving back home, and little David started talking. My brother knew he had to catch it on video, so he pulled into a parking lot and started filming. (You never see my brother's face; it makes me think of the grown-ups on the Charlie Brown cartoons, except you can understand what my brother's saying.) My nephew is groggy and a little confused and says things such as "Is this real life?" "Papi, you have four eyes." "Is this gonna to be forever?"

Funny stuff. And I'll admit, when I saw the video later in the evening I felt guilty laughing at my poor nephew. But when he

started cracking up at himself—and I saw that he was OK—I knew all was well. The rest of our family watched, and then it was filed away as one of those home videos that goes into the family vault to be replayed at a rehearsal dinner or some momentous occasion. It was simply a special documentation of a day in my nephew's life.

Several months later, in January, my brother started reconnecting with old friends on Facebook and posted the video on his page—again, thinking nothing of it. The video wasn't easy to share there, so he posted it on YouTube.

My brother and sister-in-law had *no* idea what was coming.

Within four days it had been viewed 3 million times. And it increased exponentially from there. The views have since peaked, but it's still quite popular.

When I first heard about the hits, I was amazed but I didn't think much of it ... until the media started calling. At first the entertainment shows started mentioning it simply as another YouTube sensation—shows such as VH1's *Best Week Ever* and *Inside Edition*. Then there were a few of the regular homemade spinoffs where people would create animated videos using the audio. And then the newspapers started asking for interviews—the *Wall Street Journal*, *Chicago Sun Times*, *Orlando Sentinel*. Then the *Today Show* called. And that's only the tip of the iceberg. (Honestly, I can't keep up with it all.) What's even more amazing is that the lines from the video have become part of people's everyday vernacular. Other family members have encountered friends who love the video, and they're shocked when they realize they're related to the kid in the video. Even singer John Mayer referred to the video just before a concert. And High School Musical's Zac Afrom mentioned liking "David After Dentist" in a recent interview.

It's truly unbelievable and surreal. Overall it's been a positive experience for my nephew and his family. They like

that the video makes people laugh. Everyone can use some levity these days. And I appreciate what my brother says: "If David didn't like this adventure, we wouldn't be on it."

But there's also been some criticism. For me it's been hard to read or hear negative comments; basically, it hurts my feelings for people to think what they do about my family. Some critics voice genuine concerns, but others are downright mean and cruel (thankfully, little David hasn't read these comments). I have to remember that getting defensive isn't the correct response.

I am taking my cues from my brother and sister-in-law. They say that as parents they understand and appreciate people's concerns, but they have a perspective that others don't. "We know what is going on in his life—at home, at church and at school," Tessie says. "He is an A student who cares deeply for his family and who loves the Lord with all his heart. Those are still the priorities in my son's life."

I have my concerns and I have voiced them, but I trust David's parents. They're smart, cautious and praying for wisdom and direction. They also seek wise, godly counsel from family and close friends about the media requests and have even turned down appearances with big-name talk show hosts because they didn't have peace. My brother and sister-in-law are first and foremost parents to David and his younger brother, Will. They would never do anything to harm their sons. They didn't make this happen; they are simply staying open to the opportunities that come their way and know that God is in control.

"He's the only one who could have worked this out because we never planned this nor intended for it to happen," Tessie told me. "We are a God-fearing family who want nothing else but God's will to be done in our lives, and we're committed to facilitating our sons with all they need to fulfill God's call on their lives."

My brother adds to this sentiment: "We believe there is more to this story, but we are taking it one step at a time and letting God reveal what plans He has for us through this. ... We are still trying to figure out the overall purpose."

In reality, their lives haven't changed much. Yes, they have the occasional media requests, but paparazzi aren't camped outside their door. They have their priorities in order. When the family was invited to New York for the *Today Show*, they scheduled their trip so they were back home in time for little David's flag football game; his dad is also the coach. They know what's most important.

And the "fame" hasn't gone to my nephew's head. He's just a normal now-8-year-old boy, loving life. He's actually somewhat shy when people recognize him in public (it does happen, but not too often). His friends at school thought it was funny and it was the topic of conversation for probably a week. Then life returned to normal. And at home, he's just my nephew wanting to play football, hide-and-seek or video games.

A lot has happened because of this video going viral. But my favorite result is my brother being contacted by a soldier in Iraq. On my brother's blog, the soldier told him that he and his fellow soldiers had only recently seen the video and it gave them a laugh. If anyone needs a moment to laugh, it's our soldiers serving our country. I was glad the group enjoyed the video, but I'm even more thrilled that my brother and his family have a chance to send the soldiers a small thank-you for their service (he's going to send them free T-shirts). So if it took almost 19 million views, some media attention and a few harsh comments for a small group of soldiers to know there are people back home who appreciate them, it's all been worth it.

I'm still waiting on *my* free T-shirt though.