



**Ted Kluck, Ronnie Martin, Barnabas Piper**  
Hosts of the *Happy Rant* Podcast



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## THE HAPPY RANT

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# CONTENTS

<b>FOREWORD</b> .....	7
<b>INTRODUCTION: How We'll Rant in Print</b> .....	9
<b>1. Evangelical Celebrity</b> .....	13
<b>2. Christian Fiction—the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly</b> . . . .	25
<b>3. Deconstructing Faith</b> .....	37
<b>4. Cool Pastor Trends</b> .....	47
<b>5. Doing Political Engagement Well</b> .....	57
<b>6. Dream Chasing and Disappointment</b> .....	71
<b>7. The Christian Addiction to Personality Tests</b> .....	85
<b>8. Evangelical Money Guilt</b> .....	95
<b>9. Thought Leaders—Neither Thinkers nor Leaders</b> . . . . .	107
<b>10. At the Movies</b> .....	117
<b>11. Can Christians Be Funny?</b> .....	131
<b>12. Conferences, Why?</b> .....	147

<b>13.</b> Church Holiday Shenanigans .....	163
<b>14.</b> Manly Men .....	175
The Happy Rant Dictionary .....	187
<b>APPENDIX A:</b> Movie Rushmores .....	195
<b>APPENDIX B:</b> Are Sports Dumb? (A Frank and Self-Indicting Discussion) .....	203



## FOREWORD

**T**hese guys got a lot of nerve asking me to write this foreword for them. And a lot of courage. They've talked so much trash about me on their little "radio show," giving me six hundred words with which to broadcast my delicious payback takes some guts. When you're evangelical C-listers, you don't have much to lose, I guess.

I started listening to *The Happy Rant* several years ago and immediately appreciated the guys' unique blend of the petty with the profound in both reveling in and skewering our particular evangelical subculture-within-a-subculture. I've always thought the best Christian satire is the kind that's able to maintain honesty and humor while not hating its object. This has become a much trickier feat to pull off in our hyper-polarized days. There are a lot of alleged Christians out there doing the whole mockery bit. Still more are trying their hand at social media parodies. But they're either not funny or...well, not very *Christian*.

So I don't know exactly how these guys pull it off week to week. (Well, I know how Ronnie pulls it off—he clearly just kind of sits there and pretends he's not actually on the show. You can't get in too much trouble if you

don't say much at all.) I am sure the show has gotten more difficult to pull off precisely because of the rising tide of division, sensitivity, and, frankly, humorlessness on our broadcast landscapes. But somehow they manage.

In this book you'll find the typical *Rant* nonsense—riffing on, goofing off, and geeking out about Christian celebrity, thought leaders and influencers, trends and fads, arts and leisure, and so on (and to and fro). But you'll also find—if you haven't already from their previous books—that Ted, Barnabas, and Ronnie are excellent writers with distinct voices. And one of the best uses of excellent, distinct writing is puncturing the self-importance and self-seriousness of a people who owe anything good about them totally to the grace of God. It's actually one of the chief callings of the prophets to deflate the puffed-up-ness of God's people.

Now, I'm not exactly calling these dum-dums *prophets*. God's prophets, for one thing, are known for their commitment to the truth, while these guys keep perpetuating the lie that I shop for clothes at Marshalls, which is just silly, when I've only been inside a Marshalls, like, twice, and the only thing I've ever bought at a Marshalls was, like, a travel bag or whatever, certainly not clothing, but in any event, never mind. I will just say it shouldn't be beneath the people of God to laugh at ourselves. Or at Ted, Barnabas, and Ronnie while they laugh at us, with us. For us.

I trust this book will help us all with the much-needed and much-absent humility we need to laugh at ourselves. I "trust," because they didn't actually let me see the manuscript before they asked me to write this thing, so again—*the nerve* of these guys. But I'm sure it won't hurt. It might even be fun.

I'm almost at my six hundred word limit here, so I'll round out this foreword with a killer book blurb in the true spirit of *The Happy Rant*: If a B-lister like me can enjoy C-listers like these guys, then so can D-listers like you.

Happy ranting.

Jared C. Wilson  
Kansas City, Missouri



## INTRODUCTION: HOW WE'LL RANT IN PRINT

**H**ey, welcome to *The Happy Rant*. I'm your host, Ted Kluck, joined as always on the page by my good friends and partners in radio\* (and now writing), Barnabas Piper and Ronald J. Martin. Actually, Ronald already joined me on the page twice, in our breathtaking and paradigm-shifting bestsellers† *Finding God in the Dark* and *Bridezilla of Christ*, which *Publishers Weekly* once called “still in print.”

Seriously though, we're all writers, albeit all a little different in our styles and approaches. We're also all friends who have hosted a podcast called *The Happy Rant* together for eight years or so. Way back then, we were just guys meeting up on Skype once a week, doing no show prep, and recording our calls, and now...come to think of it...we're still just three guys meeting up

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\* By which I mean podcasting.

† By which I mean...eh...never mind.

on Skype once a week, doing no show prep, and recording our calls. It's just that now we're sponsored by huge, multinational corporations like Dwell Bible and Visual Theology.

More importantly, we all love Christ. Pipe and Ron are even men of the cloth, officially. I'm just a guy in the pew, but still. And we all love writing and thinking and talking about things in ways that don't take ourselves, or even the issues, too seriously. If you enjoy that kind of banter, you'll enjoy this book. If not, may I humbly suggest *Reformed Dogmatics* by Herman Bavinck, which is a lot of fun for the whole family.

If you listen to the program, you know that in addition to our buttery-smooth professional radio voices, we never talk over each other and always let the others finish their points without interjecting. That's largely how this book will work as well in that we'll take a topic like evangelical celebrity (spoiler: That's the first chapter) and will delineate, with their initials at the beginning of the section, who is writing. That way if you really hate me on the show but love Pipe and Ron, you can skip directly to their parts. It's like hitting the skip-ahead button on your podcast app, but you'll be doing it with your eyes.

A note on structure: You'll notice that we have included footnotes. Don't skip those, because they're funny and are often jokes we (read: I) wanted to get off but that didn't exactly fit into the flow of the text. You'll also notice that sometimes we (read: Pipe and Ron) include "Editor's Notes" in the text. Contractually, I\* want to make clear that those aren't notes from our real editors, Gene and Kyle.

A note about our humor, and consider this equal parts "statement of faith" and "trigger warning": We all love God, love the Bible, love the church, and love each other. This is the baseline. However, we all love to laugh and occasionally make jokes at the expense of the church (because,

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\* By which I mean Gene and Kyle.

let's face it, sometimes it's funny) and each other (same reason). But never about the other two things. We do this because we think it's fun but also because we think it can be healthy. For example, there is nothing "sacred" about the leadership industry or the Enneagram,\* and we savage both mercilessly in this book. But we also spend equal amounts of time goofing on Young Reformeddom, which is a subculture we have all benefitted and drawn paychecks from in the past. Still, it's funny.

A note about language: When you're friends with a group of people for almost a decade, you have lingo and inside jokes that often need explanations. That explanation comes at the end of the book, via "The Happy Rant Dictionary." Look there to read who @JaredCWilson is† and why I call Ron "baby" so often.

A note on the posture of your heart while reading: Don't get offended. None of this is that big a deal. And if you do get offended, please email Pipe or Ron, and not me.

So sit back, relax, gather your 10 to 12 kids at your feet, and enjoy reading this book out loud to them around the hearth.

And until next time,  
Ted Kluck

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\* Though Richard Rohr might beg to differ!

† He's an author who is releasing a book...NOW...and also in 20 minutes.





## EVANGELICAL CELEBRITY

**TK** I didn't know much about Christian conferences, except that they seemed like church camp for adults—inasmuch as you pretended to be better friends with people than you actually were, and there was a snack every night. I was barely 30, *Why We're Not Emergent: By Two Guys Who Should Be* had just dropped, and I was at the Moody Pastors' Conference with my wife, whom I'd been sneaking past the Moody gestapo all week (this is super fun) because apparently their “no women in the men's dorms” motif extended even to married couples.

Anyway.

“Wanna meet [name redacted]?” my coauthor on *WWNE* and cospeaker

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\* This book came out before Twitter, which I think is really important. In that, if the book had dropped in 2021 and was called *Why We're Not Deconstructing: By Two Guys Who Should Be*, it would have been essentially the same book, but the reception would have been a lot different. In 2006, pre-Twitter, pastors were allowed to genuinely like something that was potentially uncool without having to do the calculus of how it would “play” on Twitter. Actually, I hope someone young and talented is working on *Why We're Not Deconstructing*...I'd read that now, and I think we really need it.

at the conf, Kevin DeYoung, asked. If you don't know Kevin, it's because he's had a quiet little career in the intervening years, basically dropping off the Internet completely and selling a succession of moderately-to-not-at-all-successful books. Wait a minute...that's me. Kevin is famous now, and for good reason, as he's a good writer and thinker. But he wasn't famous then. And I didn't know the aforementioned celebrity from any of the other tweed-jacket-and-bow-tie types at this conference. "Sure," I replied, and we ambled over to a middle-aged guy behind a table signing books, which pretty much sums up the entire vibe of the Moody Pastors' Conference.

Kevin introduced himself, and we started talking to the guy, whom I've since learned is, of course, incredibly accomplished. But then a funny thing happened as we were talking: The guy fell asleep. Like, first it was half-lidded Garfield-type eyes and then full-on, chin bobbing down to his chest and then waking with a start. It was at that point that I fully understood the evangelical fame rocket ship that Kevin and I were on together. I finally understood the excess and decadence that draws people to the conference circuit. We then had a snack and went back up to our rooms. Life in the fast lane.

That was my first taste of evangelical celebrity. Writing that book with Kevin, I've learned, almost made me like a kid who starred in a third-tier network show 20 years ago. Sometimes, even today, a colleague will introduce me as "the guy who cowrote *Why We're Not Emergent*," and I'll be forced to come up with an appropriate, self-deprecating, demure response. I am the Ricky Schroder of Christian publishing.

Serious question, though: Why do we clearly and obviously still want a thing that we *know* is bad for us? Meaning, we clearly make fun of evangelical celebrity as our own means of dealing with the fact that we haven't made it to that level...yet inside, we all still can name a myriad of ways that we know it's not good for us.

We can probably separate evangelical celebrities into a few categories:

*Full-On Fame-Embracing Clowns:* These guys are the ones who create a personal logo for their own names or initials, chase arena shows, and are pretty shameless about it. The inevitable scandal that follows when it turns out that money, fame, and power are all bad for a person's heart surprises no one.

*I Pretend Not to Want Fame Because That's the Appropriate Posture, but Clearly I Still Want It:* This may have been most of Young Reformeddom before Young Reformeddom turned into Paunchy-Middle-Aged Reformeddom. This may be us now?

*I'm Famous and Can Actually Handle It:* Pipe's dad and maybe nobody else.

*I Baptize My Fame Obsession by Telling Myself I'm Called to Minister to Other Influential People:* The first rule of chasing fame is to convince yourself that chasing it is noble.

*I Want It So Incredibly Bad but Don't Have the Chops or Charisma to Pull It Off:* See Twitter, where a lot of these guys hang out. Or the "leadership" industry.

Why do we want what's bad for us?

**RM** That's the question, isn't it? Why do I want that triple cheeseburger with large fries and a peanut butter shake...for every meal? Because it tastes delish and momentarily satisfies my cravings for the kind of salty-sweet, carb-heavy Turkish delight that my appetite pleads with me to fill. On a base level, celebrity and fame seek to fulfill humanity's intrinsic need for love, acceptance, and affirmation, but the result is akin to filling a cavity with whipped cream. The problem of course is that I like whipped cream. A lot.

**TK** I think part of what's hard in this is that we don't have anyone telling

us not to want the Turkish delight of fame—and for a while, we even have people telling us to chase it, inasmuch as we need (in 2021 at least) a “platform” to sell a book, and you chase the platform by doing some of the things that can lead to an unhealthy obsession with fame/persona...things like chasing “likes” and “follows” that can then be parlayed into a book deal.

And for a while it’s great because the book deals and speaking gigs provide a little extra cashish, which makes us and our wives happy. These aren’t, in and of themselves, bad things—much like the burger in Ron’s example isn’t a bad thing—yet the result of consuming them almost every day is almost always bad.

For example, when I was on social media, I couldn’t even go an entire day without checking to see what people thought about me, my pictures, or my cleverness. I couldn’t handle it. I wasn’t strong enough. Posting the picture wasn’t wrong, but checking all the time to see what people thought—that was unhealthy.

For example, in Judges, Samson didn’t end up blind and imprisoned and crushed by a ceiling overnight; it was a bunch of disobedient, hubristic flourishes, large and small, that got him there.

**BP** I have a few thoughts.

First, I’m hungry. Thank you, Ronnie.

Second, I would include Tim Keller in the category of *I’m Famous and Can Actually Handle It*. I think R.C. Sproul, Eugene Peterson, and J.I. Packer would have fit the bill too, but they’ve since been freed from this temporal punishment called evangelical fame.

But to actually address the question of fame, I think I come at this a little differently than y’all do, primarily because my dad has been “Christian famous” (i.e., very large fish in a very tiny bowl—his words, not mine) since I was just out of puberty. I came to think of fame as an interruption to a happy life. Here are a couple of examples.

Move-in day at Wheaton College my freshman year. I roll into Smith-Traber dorm trying not to look like I could taste my own anxious bile. When my turn comes at the check-in desk, the cute, smiling sophomore girl who welcomes me finds my name, gives me my room assignment, then says, “Oh, and that guy over there has been waiting for you to show up for over an hour.” Turns out a young man who lived in the area heard that “John Piper’s Son” (my other, better-known name) was moving in and came over to help. It was so thoughtful. And creepy. And not at all how I wanted my first moments of getting-out-on-my-own-and-just-being-myself to go.

Or there was the time I went to a Chick-fil-A in Griffin, Georgia, with my parents and my two daughters to enjoy the only perfectly Christian kosher meal. (Keep in mind, my parents have lived in Minnesota since the Nixon era.) We ordered, we heard “my pleasure” at least four times, and we found a seat...only to be waylaid by the manager, who proceeded to chew the adoring, gushing, Calvinistic fat for no less than 25 minutes while my dad politely nodded at him, my mom gazed into the middle distance, my food got cold, and my kids got bored. And this is not the only Chick-fil-A where we’ve encountered this same scenario. Maybe sanctified chicken is not for us.

I would say my dad gets recognized and/or interrupted two-thirds of the time we try to go out as a family, no matter what state we are in. So yeah, I associate fame with cold food, boredom, and lack of social etiquette.

Then again, the rush of being recognized is real. The rush of being invited is real. The rush of being *paid* is super real. It feels good for people to want me to speak or write or contribute my name to something. At least it’s a rush when it’s because of me, not because of my dad—although it’s often difficult to separate the two. (But I’ll save the identity crisis stuff for my therapist and my memoir.) So I get the drug-like rush of fame. It’s a high that demands hit after hit.

I think we all have the propensity to think that we will be different. Sure, fame turned most *other* authors/pastors/influencers into tyrants or cheats or whatever, but not me. I will balance fame with humility. I will overcome it with the most disciplined spiritual disciplines. I will climb the ivory tower and not plummet to my demise.

So let me pose another question: How are we supposed to take warnings against fame seriously when *they all come from famous people*? It's hard to take a warning seriously when someone is basically saying, "Don't try to be as well known or sell as many books as I have."

**TK** I have a quick Chick-fil-A story. Once, KK (EDITOR'S NOTE: See "The Happy Rant Dictionary" for explanations of names like "KK") and I were on a road trip, and we stopped at the Chick-fil-A in Louisville. Immediately, upon entry, we saw a handful of the most fresh-faced, affluent, attractive-looking college kids imaginable—like top-of-the-Christian-gene-pool-type kids. I said to KK, "I bet those are Christian college kids. Let's investigate." So we got a little closer and saw their shirts, and they were, in fact, the Wheaton College Crew Team...which is like the very top of the Christian gene pool. They looked like they should have been in that swanky New England boarding school movie from the '90s starring Robin Williams and a bunch of floppy-haired rich kids. (EDITOR'S NOTE: We could not confirm whether the Wheaton crew team has nailed down a J.Crew sponsorship yet. In our minds, that would be a little on the nose.)

To your question, though, doesn't the warning kind of *have* to come from a famous person? In the sense that I can only really believe a narrative about fame being dangerous if it comes from someone who has lived it (or at least been adjacent to it) and who has seen the dangers firsthand?

So, for example, if your dad or Timmy K—both of whom have handled it well—were to say, "I'm grateful for the platform the Lord allowed me to have, but at times I was really tempted to vanity or self-glorification"

or “At times it really put a strain on my marriage,” I feel like I would listen to that. Or even if somebody like Driscy (EDITOR’S NOTE: See “The Happy Rant Dictionary”), who didn’t handle it as well, were to say something like, “I chased this for about a decade, and it wrecked my life for a while,” I’d listen to that too. Does that make sense?

**BP** It does make sense, total sense. I guess the warnings I was thinking about were the ones offered to an audience of 10,000 Reformed aspiring famous dudes by the suited and well-published pastor of a prominent megachurch. When he looks across the vast arena of beards and tweed and says, “Stay humble, focus on your church, and do the ministry God has given you,” he is absolutely right. But I wonder if the audience hears the voice of Charlie Brown’s teacher while only seeing the scope and size and glam of the literal and metaphorical platform.

**RM** Right! It’s like only famous people have the nerve to keep telling us to guard against fame, which can feel just a tad bit patronizing. I remember my good friend Carl Trueman, who I’ve never spoken to before in my life, was on a panel I saw at T4G (Together for the Gospel) years ago. With a very calm but agitated tone (i.e., Carl Trueman), he asked why they never have any nonfamous pastors speak to all the other nonfamous pastors who compose the majority of the audience. Of course, it’s because nobody would show up if you had Ted Martin or Ronnie Kluck doing a plenary sesh. But Carl felt like it was patronizing for all these megachurch evangecelebs to be preaching to...umm...not the choir.

There’s kind of a weirdo mystery that hangs over the acquiring of fame, isn’t there? Some evangecelebs have done everything they can to become Christian famous, and they (humblyish) bask in the glow once they’ve achieved notoriety. Others never asked for it but got it anyway, like your dad, Sproul, and Packer, unless we’re totally wrong about Sproul, since he

and Alice Cooper basically did like sleepovers and s'mores together. And then there's literally everyone else that will never achieve any fame whether they desire it or not.

What's insidious about pastoral ministry in general is that every pastor has some level of "fame" thrust upon them in the sense that they stand in front of an "audience" every week and "perform," which is enough notoriety to create problems for pastors at any level. I'm going to get in trouble for saying "audience" and "perform" even though I put them in quotes twice, huh?

**BP** It sounds like you're having some performance issues, Ronnie. I'm sorry about that.

All this raises the question in my mind of why people want *others* to be famous. Why do people forget that pastors and authors are not different from the person in the pew or holding the book? Somehow truth—or the perception of truth—has been democratized. The person with the most followers/listeners/viewers/readers has the best things to say. Seems to me that the person with the best things to say should have the most followers/listeners/viewers/readers. Occasionally it works out that way, but it's way too easy to generate fame. And once you have it, people listen no matter what asinine things you say about best lives, real marriages, washing faces, or making America great.

**RM** Zack Eswine discusses what you're talking about in his book *The Imperfect Pastor*. He presents us with two pastors. One is faithfully pastoring a small church with minimal influence, while the other has a larger ministry and widespread influence but is equally as faithful. Eswine asks, "Why do we only invite the latter to speak at our conferences?" The obvious answer is that there's nothing sexy or, umm, marketable about the unknown pastor doing all those terribly unnoticeable things. We want pastor/influencer

Matt Chandler from the Village who can preach our socks off and serve us Wagyu rib eyes from his meat ranch. **EDITOR'S NOTE:** Sadly, the Right Reverend Chandler has since stepped away from the beef business. We'll have to make do with metaphorical rib eyes instead. Not Pastor Mike from Peoria, Illinois, who's going to tell us how the Wednesday night potluck has been "picking up some real steam lately."

Like Piper said, what's the real difference between Matt and Mike? They put their pants on one leg at a time after all, unless Matt has some machine on his meat ranch that allows him to get both legs in at the same time. I'm just going to declare right now that it's highly possible. But the real difference is that only one has *followers*. Both are *faithful*. But having *followers* has become the unrelenting pursuit of our volatile era. And we can find 50 gray-shaded ways to spiritualize our quest for more.

I'm going to turn it over to Ted Martin now.

**TK** Baby, "Ted Martin" sounds like a relief pitcher for the Pirates in the 1970s...like the kind of guy who would sit in the bullpen and rip ciggies with Kent Tekulve between innings. That guy is, for sure, actually famous.

By the way, a person isn't really famous to me unless they play a professional sport, were on one of the 12 records I owned in 1993, or act in movies. To me, none of these conference-chasing Reformed clowns are *actually* famous. But still, it's fun to talk about.

I think Pipe hit the nail on the head. Our entire fame paradigm is flipped from when we grew up. It used to be that you had insane talent, and as a result, you got famous. Now the means are in place to build the platform first and chase a feeling that is so ethereal, those of us who are a certain age still equate it with otherworldly talent of some kind. That's why it feels so comforting and real to me when someone who is actually talented—like Timmy or Pipe's dad—gets famous. And why it feels so cheap and fake and dumb to equate a certain amount of social media traction with *actual fame*.

In the early 2000s, I got a chance to interview Michael Jordan when I was writing for ESPN (solid flex by me). Even though he was at the end of his career and was semiwashed, that guy was famous. When he walked into ANY room, all eyes were on him, because none of us could do what he could do. Even other legitimately famous guys—like Desmond Howard, who was hanging around the concourse that night—deferred to Mike.

Also, I feel like Carl Trueman was the *perfect* guy to warn all of us about this in that he was British (or whatever) and semifamous. Except that everybody listened to him, nodded their heads in agreement, and then immediately went back to tweeting.

**BP** I keep thinking about Ronnie's comment earlier comparing fame to triple cheeseburgers and milkshakes, and not just because I drove past Five Guys on my way home today. What sticks in my mind is how much more insidious fame is than fatty food. You can eat like trash for years, but as soon as you realize how detrimental it is to your health, you can change—mix in salads, hit the elliptical, become pretentious (oops, I mean become vegan, go keto, or take up CrossFit). Not only that, it's widely known and accepted that junk food is, well, junk. So we *know* we're shortening our life span one French fry at a time, and we limit our consumption, or maybe we don't—but either way we do so willfully.

Not so with fame. All evidence points to fame being dangerous. Vegas wouldn't even take bets on whether a child Hollywood or musical star will go crazy. We're rarely surprised when dirt comes to light on an athlete, a politician, an actor, or a tycoon. We've even reached the point where we can practically predict when a famous pastor will bite the dust; we know the signs. (And then we just ignore them. Because of...fame. A vicious cycle.) *And yet* we want fame, society encourages the pursuit of fame, building brands and platforms is a whole industry, and we even attach the success and reputation of Jesus to the fame of His preachers.

So in one sense, we want fame like we want that burger. But in another sense, fame makes us blind and stupid. I know every bite of greasy, bacon-laden ground beef is bad for me, but sometimes it's worth it because I know I can jog it off and have a green smoothie the next day. Fame is different; it's *hard* to see the danger. It's hard to recognize the impending consequences. It's hard to see how it twists us. And once it has, we can't just sweat away the effects and drink a half gallon of humility to make up for it.

**RM** You're getting pretty loose with the *H* word there, Pipe. But that unearths the heart of it, doesn't it? God gives fame and influence to whomever He decides to give it to, but with that blessing comes a responsibility to steward well what was never ours to begin with. I don't know that I've ever heard anyone mention celebrity or fame as being under the rightful ownership of God. We tend to think of it as some kind of decadent immorality sealed up in a gaudy glass case that nobody is allowed to touch. But it can be a gift of redemptive magnitude if stewarded with lowliness of spirit. Fame is poisonous when it increases one's appetite for self-glory over self-giving.

**TK** I think that's a good word—that God gives fame and influence to whomever He decides to give it to. That said, let's just try to be good at something and see what happens. Isn't it infinitely more attractive and interesting and winsome to be good at something and just let the fame "happen" to you than to chase it? You should need to have talent to be able to touch the thing in the gaudy glass case. I'm a believer in the glass case. Not everybody should be allowed to touch it, because if they can, it's no longer special.

I guess for me it's the chasing of it that seems so unbecoming. The cloying, "I need this" part of it is exactly the part that makes me want to run for the hills.

Kent Tekulve was good at throwing a baseball at a weird arm angle, and while Kent Tekulve is kind of a running “bit” on our podcast, we all love him for it and for looking cool on ’70s baseball cards. If Kent walked into our studio, we would all defer to him, because he would be the most famous guy in the room and a guy who can do what we can’t do. We’d laugh at his unfunny jokes. We’d offer to blurb his unclever jock biography. Heck, I’d probably ghostwrite it if the numbers were right.

He played in front of 40,000 people every night at work. And we’d all know it, immediately. This is as it should be.

The thing is, my kid came home from work tonight distraught over some work drama. I sat there and listened intently to him, tried to give some fatherly/biblical wisdom, and then gave him a hug and told him I loved him. When my younger son can’t quite figure out algebra and we sit at the dining room table for hours laughing and swearing and trying to figure out when we’ll actually use it in real life (spoiler: We won’t)...he doesn’t care if I’m famous. My linemen at Humboldt High School don’t care if I’m famous—they just want someone to teach them how to get in a stance and tell them “Good job” when they get it right. Sometimes they need a ride home from practice. They don’t need me to be a conference speaker. They don’t even know what conferences are. They don’t care.

I need people in my life who don’t care. I need to not care, personally, because I can’t handle caring. I’m not strong enough. But equally important is me continuing to try to be great at what I do. I think God wants this too. And if He wants me to have the fame, He’ll give it to me.

with it. We bring ego and insecurity and a gaping void in our hearts to sports just like we do to love and work and parenting and everything else. And that's when we turn our children's T-ball game into a résumé builder or a beautiful fall afternoon at Neyland Stadium into a beer-soaked, golf ball-chucking rage fest. (As an aside and as a fellow transplant to Tennessee, is it a local tradition to bring golf balls to a college football game? I get throwing beer cans or sodas or something. But golf balls?)

Sports are awesome, and I know you agree with me. We've both learned so much about hard work, failure, teamwork, leadership, competition, and humility (and humiliation), and we've had a plain old good time doing so. We love to watch sports with friends and family, soak up the atmosphere at a minor league ballpark, and jump out of our seats to cheer for a breakaway dunk or a long TD. We've developed real, meaningful friendships through sports and had the chance to influence the lives of others through coaching. So no, sports aren't dumb. We are sometimes, and that can foul up an otherwise fantastic pastime.

**TK** No, man, you're absolutely right, and that's an important distinction. The "dumb" parts (read: sin nature) reside squarely in our own hearts, and that's on us. And yet we're continually drawn to sports for their ability to deliver something magical—a moment, a relationship, a memory.

Sports is the ultimate high-ceiling, low-floor endeavor in that many of my happiest and most hopeful moments in life have come from sports. Some of my fondest memories of childhood involve falling asleep in the passenger's seat of my dad's car as we drove home from some stadium or arena late at night, stopping to get sodas and roast beef sandwiches at some random gas station that had a good deli. The fact that we got to see Dan Marino, Jerry Rice, Eric Dickerson, Tony Mandarich, and so many other greats in their primes is part of the magic too and creates a lifelong cache of memories that bond us together.

Just the other day, I got an out-of-the-blue text from one of my former long snappers at Lane College, where I coach. The text simply said “I miss you guys” and was accompanied by an award-quality photo of me standing next to our punter, chatting on the sideline before the game. It was a moment frozen in time, on a day full of many moments, but it delighted me that he cared enough to send it and to remember similar times and similar chats we’d had on sidelines together.

That’s the magic of sports.

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