By JAMIE PATTERSON
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The Patterson home has almost taken on the feel of an etiquette school.
My husband Jason and I are trying to teach our son James all the appropriate manners that one should have with adults and other children.
Of course we are teaching him the art of sharing and being kind to others, and he seems to be catching onto to that real quick.
But there are a few things that we are having trouble with when it comes to manners.
Over the course of the last few weeks and a couple of “bless his heart” under my breath, James is slowly starting to make progress.
James may need reminding from time to time, but he has managed to say “ yes ma'am, no ma’am” and “no sir, yes sir.” He is beginning to remember his “please” and “thank you.”
Growing up, it got to where I didn’t have to think about those expressions. It almost came natural. I am hoping James will pick up on that same habit.
But a few nights ago, all the progress we made came crashing down.
For some reason, every now and then I get a wild hair to “get fancy” with our supper. I’ll prepare a dish that I usually don’t make, and I’ll set the table with our china. I figured we got a whole cabinet full of china, and we need to use it from time to time even if it is just us at home.
After grace, we began to eat. I looked over my family, happy and content with the sight I saw. Jason was pleased with his salmon dish, complimenting it as he ate. James was carefully eating his spaghetti with no mess. And I was happy to see that I had remembered to place all the appropriate serving pieces in their place.
And then it began.
James dropped his sippy cup under the table. Acting like a dog, it took him forever to retrieve it and get back to his seat.
The spaghetti was then thrust into his mouth, as he began to recite a song from a movie he

watched earlier that day. With sauce dripping down his mouth, he informed me he was eating like a dinosaur.
Asking him (actually, more like telling him) to sit down and eat his meal properly, he finally eased up with his shenanigans.
And then Jason, an adult mind you, took a drink of his water. But this was no ordinary sip. He began to forcefully gulp his drink down.
It sounded like his Adam's apple was gonna pop out of his neck with the speed and force the water was hitting the back of his throat.
And of course, son copies daddy. James began to gulp his water down. In between giggles, water began to come out his mouth like one of those fountains in historic Italy.
When I left the table, both of the boys were laughing uncontrollably and giving each other high fives.
Even with fine china and gold rimmed glasses, the Patterson came out with those two.
"That's where he gets it from," I mumbled to myself as I washed dishes.
"You gotta admit, that was funny," Jason said, handing me his plate.
Funny? A grown man baptizing himself with tap water?
I shook my head as the kitchen cleared out.
James has an excuse with his age, but Jason should know better.
Although, Jason does have his good points. He walks on the street side when we are heading down a sidewalk. He holds the door open for me. He waits until everyone is seated before he starts a meal. He gives up his seat for others.
But when it's just the Patterson family, he does what he can to lighten the mood. And his son is right behind him.
I would never tell him, but it is kind of funny.
Well, at least James said "thank you" after I wiped the sauce and water off his shirt.