

Christian Urban Legends
“A Godly Home Guarantees Godly Kids, part 3”

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / Aug. 3, 2008

A godly home does not guarantee godly kids...but a godly home can lay the foundation for the grace of God and the Gospel of Christ that *alone* can produce godly kids.

I. Stop Looking for Some Kind of Parenting Guarantee

Prov. 22:6 “Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

A stronger and more correct translation and interpretation of this verse would be: “If you bring up a child *in his way* [i.e. the way he is bent (as a sinner)] when he is old he will not depart from it.”

II. Start Living and Speaking the Gospel as Much as Possible

I Timothy 5:16

III. Keep Praying for God’s Grace and Mercy to Explode in the Life of Your Child

Colossians 4:2, 12; Mark 9:14-29

IV. Never Forget that the Trials of Parenting are All About Your Growth and God’s Glory!

A. A Parenting Trial Can Help You See Your Own Sin More Clearly

Psalm 38:15, 17-18 “For in You, O Lord, I hope; You will hear, O Lord my God... For I am ready to fall, and my sorrow is continually before me. For I will declare my iniquity; I will be in anguish over my sin.”

“The fact is that none of our children, no matter how spiritually inclined, turns out like we would have imagined or dreamed. They make choices that you and I wouldn't make. They go through the bumps and bruises of young adulthood, sometimes bloodying their noses in unnecessary ways. They may share your faith, but they don't share every one of your values. And along the way they can be quite candid about your weaknesses and failures and how they have determined to avoid them...

We weren't the parent that we wanted to be. Yes, we were very dedicated to do it God's way, and we were always looking to learn. We sought to make God's presence obvious to our children, and we talked much about the Gospel. We endeavored to be faithful in correction, instruction, and discipline. But in all of this there was one huge and glaring problem: we did it all as sinners. There were so many times when our sin got in the way.”

~ Paul David Tripp, *Lost in the Middle*, p. 104-105

And as hard as it is, be willing to confess your sins to your prodigal son or daughter - even before they repent, before they change, and before they ever tell you what they've done wrong and ask you to forgive them.

“Let us challenge you to do something that we've tried to do as we've faced our family difficulties: strive to win the gospel race! Think to yourself: If I'm the first to confess, the first to repent and humble myself, the first to the cross, I'll experience renewed grace from Him! I won't have to worry about trying to defend my own reputation or the 'moral high ground.' Instead, I'll be flooded with God's mercy. Remembering that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5) should motivate you to resist the temptations to blame, to hide, and to win.”

~ Elyse Fitzpatrick and Jim Newheiser, *When Good Kids Make Bad Choices*, p. 56

B. A Parenting Trial Can Allow You to Experience God's Grace Like Never Before

"The problem is that we are seeking the grace of release, when God knows that we need the grace of refinement. During this 'now' period of preparation, God's grace will come to us again and again in uncomfortable forms.

This is where we tend to have an agenda conflict with our Lord. We don't tend to be very excited about being around people who don't love and affirm us. We get excited about children who grow up and do what is right. We get excited about making plans that actually come true. We get excited about physical health. We get excited about investments that have a good return. We get excited about having a safe, successful, stress-free, and predictable life. The problem with all of these things is not that they are wrong to desire. The problem is that we have settled for far too little. And we are surprised, shocked, and disappointed when God shakes them in order to refine us. You see, God has planned more and better things for us than we would want for ourselves."

~ Paul David Tripp, *Lost in the Middle*, pp. 198-199

Psalm 66:10-12 "For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver. You brought us into the net; You laid affliction on our backs. You have caused men to ride over our heads; we went through the fire and through the water; but You brought us out to rich fulfillment."

Psalm 119:71, 75 "It is good for me that I have been afflicted that I may learn your statutes... and that in faithfulness You have afflicted me..."

C. A Parenting Trial Can Teach You to Keep Your Focus on God instead of Your Feelings

"Because what you're experiencing is so painful you may be tempted to focus on your feelings, and yet those feelings themselves will obscure the very remedy that will ease your pain. Your pain may tell you to focus inward, and that's what you don't want to do... You want to focus on loving God and others..."

It's not uncommon for us parents to be filled with despair when our kids rebel. We feel devastated that our children are rejecting us and our values. Grief over a child who is lost to us is similar to the grief we would feel if a child had actually died. But grief from a rebellious child goes on and on and never seems to find a place of closure. It's not like we can go visit a grave and put flowers on it. Instead, this feels like an ongoing 'death' and our grieving won't go away until our child has a change of heart. Because our hearts are filled with such woe, we can be tempted to crawl into a protective coffin of our own and withdraw from friends, other family members, and even God, pulling the heavy lid down firmly over us."

~ Elyse Fitzpatrick and Jim Newheiser, *When Good Kids Make Bad Choices*, pp. 36-37

Jeremiah 17:6 "He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness in an uninhabited salt land."

Jeremiah 17:5 "Thus says the LORD: 'Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the LORD.'"

"It's easy for him to dash your hopes and send you into a downward spiral of doubt and tears, isn't it? On the other hand, if it seems to you that she's doing better, then life may seem lovely again and you may feel more like a well-watered garden. The built-in problem with putting our trust in people, especially in our children, is that they'll let us down. People were never meant to be our primary source of joy. They are *a* source of happiness to be sure, but they aren't to be *the* mediators of our gladness. Jesus Christ is to be our source – not our spouse or our children or anyone else."

~ Elyse Fitzpatrick and Jim Newheiser, *When Good Kids Make Bad Choices* P. 38

Jeremiah 17:7-8 "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit."

Don't allow your whole world to shrink down to the size of your wandering or rebellious child. If you wait until your child is doing well before you get in on what God is doing around you – you might be waiting for years and years and years. In fact, you could waste a lifetime waiting on your child.

Oh, keep praying for them and keep loving them...but go on and live your life for the glory of God. Go on and start a ministry or plug into a ministry or dive into something other than what your son or daughter is doing right now.

Matthew 22:37-39 “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Even with your broken heart, you need to get busy serving. This is not the time to pull out of serving. This is not the time to just step out of responsibilities so that you can just wake up every day with nothing to think about, and worry about, and work on but your child's problems.

“Father, I know that I've prayed about this many times before, but now I'm willing to give this situation fully over to You. Forgive me for my worry and for thinking that by my continued thought I would be able to change the course of my child's life. Forgive me for failing to trust in You and Your goodness and for thinking that my plan was better than Yours. I entrust my child to You now, and although I would pray that this cup of suffering would pass from me, I'm now willing to say with my Savior, 'Not my will, but Yours be done.' I submit myself to Your plan, even though I don't understand it, because I know You. You're a good Father. I also pray that you would help me get my eyes off of myself and my troubles and onto serving others and building Your kingdom. I trust You for the grace to make it through whatever may come...Thank You for your faithfulness. Amen.”

~ Elyse Fitzpatrick and Jim Newheiser, *When Good Kids Make Bad Choices*, pp. 43-44

“Looking back on my life, I realize until April 2001, I was living in a rain forest. My wife and sons were a continual blessing and encouragement to me. When my time of drought came, my trust in God was tested, and initially I wilted into depression. I had to learn how to have joy in the Lord even when what was most important in this life was falling apart all around me. During this time, I've discovered that a drought can be a good thing. It forces a healthy tree to send its roots deeper. I learned that when my children weren't giving me the watering I desired, I had to turn to God and trust Him more deeply than I ever had in my life.”

~ Elyse Fitzpatrick and Jim Newheiser, *When Good Kids Make Bad Choices* P. 39

Suggestions for How You Can Refocus Your Heart to Fulfill the Two Great Commands in Matthew 22:

- Demonstrate a heart of love for God by specifically speaking to others about your trust of Him and belief in His faithfulness.
- Choose two or three hymns or gospel-centered choruses that feed your soul and magnify His goodness and commit them to memory. When you're tempted to give in to hopeless sorrow, begin to sing them by faith.
- Instead of hiding from and avoiding others, look for specific opportunities to serve. You might need to bring tissues along with you, in case your eyes start to flow with tears again, but be determined to love and minister to your neighbors in faithful obedience.
- Prayerfully consider how you might help a family member. Instead of retreating and licking your wounds, make your child his favorite dinner and tell him you still love him; go for a walk with your spouse and talk about the goodness of the Lord; take your other children out for an ice cream – not to talk with them about their wayward sibling, but rather about their lives and to use the opportunity to tell them you love them.
- Memorize promises about God's willingness to answer prayer and recite them when you feel that your prayer is going nowhere. (Matthew 7:7-11; 21:22; Mark 11:24; John 15:7; Ephesians 3:20-21; James 1:5; 5:16; I John 3:22; 5:14)

- Be very careful about how you speak about your wayward child to others who are not acting as your counselors. Your child's problems will grow, in your estimation, in direct relation to the amount of time you spend running him down. Instead, seek to cover his sin whenever you can, and speak to others about your trust in God.
- Remember that Satan is the one who is telling you that you'll always feel as badly as you do right now and that things will only get worse. Be assured that although your circumstance may not change right away, God will bring you relief as you seek to faithfully serve Him.

p. 40-41, *When Good Kids Make Bad Choices*, Jim Newheiser and Elyse Fitzpatrick