

# Gospel Parenting

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[ 0 : 00 ] We'll be reading from Luke chapter 15. Third Gospel, Matthew, Mark, Luke, chapter 15.

! Jesus continued, There was a man who had two sons.

The younger one said to his father, Father, give me my share of the estate. So he divided his property between them.

Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country, and there squandered his wealth in wild living.

After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went, and he hired himself out to a citizen of that country who sent him to his fields to feed pigs.

[ 1 : 23 ] He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. When he came to his senses, he said, How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death.

I will set out and go back to my father and say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.

I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired men. So he got up and went to his father.

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him.

He ran to his son, threw his arms around him, and kissed him. The son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.

[ 2 : 32 ] I am no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants, Quick, bring the best robe and put it on him.

Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate.

For this son of mine was dead, and he's alive again. He was lost and is found. So they began to celebrate.

Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him, What was going on?

Your brother has come, he replied, And your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.

[ 3 : 38 ] The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, Look, all these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders, yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.

But when this son of yours, who had squandered your property with prostitutes, comes home, you killed the fattened calf for him. My son, the father said, You are always with me and everything I have is yours.

But we had to celebrate and be glad because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found.

Dr. Leonid Rogozov was a Russian doctor and scientist.

It was 1961, and he, along with 12 other men, were stationed to Russia's new base in Antarctica.

[ 5 : 05 ] And it was wintertime there. He woke up one morning with nausea and pain in his lower right abdomen.

Maybe some of you have experienced that, lower right pain in your abdomen. Transportation was impossible. The snowstorms made flying impossible.

There was one further problem. He was the only physician among the 12 scientists on the base.

He tried all the non-surgical treatments that he could think of, and nothing worked. His appendix had to go.

And there was only one man who could do it. And so, looking in a mirror, he operated on himself.

[ 6 : 11 ] That's kind of how I feel this morning. We're looking at Ephesians 6, verse 4. So, if you have your Bibles, Ephesians 6, verse 4, and it says, Fathers, do not exasperate your children.

Instead, bring them up in the training and the instruction of the Lord. So, obviously, this word is relevant to me.

So, Mom and Dad, if you're on the table this morning, I'm on the table with you. We're both in this together. We're holding up the mirror, like Dr. Ragazov did, to one of the most sensitive parts of our lives.

Because our work as parents, it's one of those things that we pour our lives into. Our relationship with our children is probably one of the most sensitive areas of our entire life.

That's why getting married and going off and starting your own family, one of the biggest problems, most frequent problems, is Mom and Dad problems.

[ 7 : 23 ] Because Mom and Dad have poured a lot of life into these children, and now things have changed. This is a sensitive area. Paul has something to say to us.

But if I leave us cut open, and feeling like failures, then I have failed as a Christian pastor. No, there's real hope in this passage.

There's real hope in the gospel for moms and dads. And there's hope because our God is a God of grace, a God of mercy, a God of forgiveness, of pity, of real help.

And how we need it. How we need it. And so Ephesians 6, verse 4. I've already read it.

It's one you probably already know pretty well, moms and dads. And that's actually one of the problems we have with this verse is because it's so hard to look at it with fresh eyes.

[ 8 : 26 ] It's so hard to look at it with anything new. And so I want to begin at the end, and I want to rephrase it, and maybe freshen it up a bit. There's nothing wrong with what God put, but it has become so, we're so used to hearing it, we need to hear it again.

And so let me rephrase it. Bring them up in the training and instruction of Jesus the Messiah. Bring them up in the training and instruction of Jesus the Messiah.

And when Paul uses the word Lord, he's talking about Jesus. He's not talking about God generically, he's talking about Jesus specifically. He's talking about Jesus Christ, God's appointed rescuer, God's appointed savior, the only one who can save us from our sins, who saved people from the curse of the law by becoming that curse, by taking that curse.

Jesus Christ is God's only answer to our deep, to our disastrous separation from him. He's talking about Jesus who came from the Father full of grace and truth.

Remember John, the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

So, we are to bring up our children in the training and the instruction of Jesus Christ, who for Paul is none other than the gospel itself, who is the good news, good news from God for sinners.

[ 10 : 11 ] That's the idea, that's the motive, that's the main thing. Now, I want you to think about how differently that would have sounded to the original Ephesian believers.

these sorts of household directions are actually very common in Greek writing. It's one of these things where Paul is just using a form that they're very used to.

Gentile parents would have heard things like this. And so, if you're a good parent, you would bring up your children in the training and instruction of the philosophers.

And that's what you would have heard of Plato, of Aristotle, of people like that. Now, if you were a good Jewish person and you're a good Jewish parent, you would bring up your children in the training and instruction of the law.

That's what you would have heard. That's what you would have said. Listen to how the Apostle Paul describes his upbringing. So, he was raised in a certain way. Listen to how he describes that upbringing in Acts 22.

[ 11 : 23 ] He says, I'm a Jew brought up in this city. He's talking about Jerusalem. Brought up in this city under Gamaliel, who was one of the most renowned rabbis of ever.

Under Gamaliel, I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers. So, that's how Paul grew up. He learned the law. He loved the law.

A Hebrew of Hebrews in regard to the law of Pharisee for zeal, persecuting the church. As for legalistic, as for law righteousness, faultless, blameless.

Now, that's what his parents, that's what his teachers taught him. Law righteousness, legal righteousness was the only kind of righteousness that there was that he knew of. You learn the law. You keep the law. And in keeping the law, God counts you righteous. You learn the law. You love the law.

[ 12 : 24 ] You do the law. God counts you righteous. Now, the thing we have to realize is that sort of thinking is not exactly totally foreign to the Old Testament.

Listen to how Galatians 3 puts it. The law, so this thing that Paul was trained up in and instructed in, the law is not based on faith.

On the contrary, the man who does these things will live by them. The man who does them will live. So, the law for Israel was this covenant of, if you do this, you'll prosper.

You do this and you'll live. So, in some ways, it was the Garden of Eden all over again. You eat and you die. You don't eat and you live.

You disobey and you shall surely die. So, what's required under the law? What was required in Paul's mind? And I don't want you to, I don't want to lose you here, but, again, this is how Paul was raised.

[ 13 : 35 ] This was his instruction. So, what's required under the law? Perfect, perpetual obedience. The law is this relentless, never-changing mirror of God's holiness and it demands perfection from us.

the law is this constant demand for perfection from us. The law never, ever ceases to demand from us, you should do this.

You ought to do this. You shouldn't do that. It never ceases to judge. It never ceases to evaluate. It's always looking at us saying, this is the standard.

Now you need to do it. The law wasn't given to save us and that's what Paul says in Galatians. For if the law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.

If the law could have saved you, then righteousness would have come by the law. You'd be saved by the law. But the scriptures declare that the whole world is a prisoner of sin. The law locked us up until faith should be revealed.

[ 14 : 49 ] So that's what it means to be under law. That's what Paul, that's how he grew up. That was his, the parenting style of his parents and his teachers. That's what it means to be under the law.

It means to live under this perpetual demand for obedience. Under this perfect, under this unrelenting, perfect call to obey.

You need to obey if you want to live. Disobey and you die. Obey and you live. Disobey and disaster. Disobey and distance. Just eternal distance between you and God.

Now the law never helps you obey. The law never helps you actually to obey. The law says you should obey. You ought to obey.

Cursed if you don't continue to do everything written in the book of the law. And that was Paul growing up. That's what he thought. That's what his parents taught. Thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers.

[ 15 : 52 ] And so he devoted himself wholeheartedly to obey it. Thinking this was the way to live. This was the way to blessing. This was the way to favor with God.

And so he grew up under the law. And now, but now, but now, parents, he comes to us. He comes to you. And he doesn't say bring them up in the training and instruction of the law.

But rather, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. And you can't imagine what a totally different paradigm that was and is.

It's a totally different atmosphere for parenting. And so, instead of this relentless demand, but without any help, it's grace.

it's Jesus Christ coming clothed in the gospel. It's Jesus. And so we aren't stopping at do this, but we're going further, parents.

[ 17 : 01 ] Paul is insisting that we have to go further than just the do this. It's here is Jesus. Here he is in the gospel. Here is the gospel for you, child.

And that's the whole atmosphere. Jesus, full of grace and full of truth, coming to save sinners who don't deserve it, who haven't obeyed, who can't obey, who are dead and hopeless.

It's Jesus coming to them. And so, it's grace. And so my question for you, mom and dad, and the question I have to ask myself is, which mountain are my feet planted on?

And he talks about this in Galatians 3. He says, Mount Sinai, the law, this covenant, you need to obey and continue to do everything written in it.

Mount Sinai, Paul says, bears children who are slaves. They're slaves. They're all wrapped up. They can't escape.

[ 17 : 59 ] They can't escape the condemnation of God. They can't escape their sin. They can't escape their guilt. They can't escape their shame. They're slaves. So are your feet planted there, mom and dad?

Where in your heart it's relentless demand without any help. where it talks about Jerusalem, Mount Calvary, where Jesus, the God-man, came and was nailed to a cross for sinners.

Is that what's ruling in your heart? And he took the curse of the law. And he set his people free.

And so moms and dads, what are, what's ruling in your heart? The law of God that says, the law that says, do this and it's never done?

Do this and it never happens. Or is it Jesus Christ full of grace for helpless sinners? sinners?

What's ruling in your heart? That Jesus came full of grace to help sinners who were really stuck and in a bad way.

[ 19 : 20 ] So, what's ruling in your heart? And what are you giving to your children? Paul, in saying, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord, he's saying, bring them up in the gospel of Jesus.

Give them grace. Give them what they need. So, what does that look like? What is Paul talking about? What would that look like in our lives?

Well, I want to just get some things out of the way and maybe head some things off at the past.

What's that atmosphere like? Well, it doesn't mean a couple things.

It doesn't mean that you don't have expectations or rules. It's not anything goes. That's not what that means. It's not that at all. It's not that you don't care about sin.

It's not that you don't address sin. It's not that you don't put your finger on sin. It's not that you go easy on sin. Grace has always, always, always been accused of going light on sin, of being an excuse to sin.

[ 20 : 19 ] So, you remember Paul in Romans 6, he's saying, shall we sin? He's answering this rhetorical question. Shall we sin because we're not under law, but under grace?

Well, if we're not under law, if we're not under this relentless demand to obey or live, won't we just sin? And Paul says, no, not by no means. We shouldn't go on sinning.

It's not saying that there's no place for the Ten Commandments. Not at all. Paul uses the Ten Commandments in his parenting instructions. I'm actually hoping to preach a sermon in a few weeks on how the law is something that we need to believe.

It's good for us. Psalm 119 is full of that. It's not that. And I'm not saying that there's no consequences. Or anything like that.

Not at all. There's always consequences for sin. And sometimes part of the grace-filled parent is to let your child suffer those consequences. Those consequences of sin even in the covenant of grace, even in the new covenant.

[ 21 : 27 ] then what does it look like to bring up our children in the training and instruction of the Lord? What's it like to have Jesus Christ full of grace, ruling in our hearts as we parents?

Well, I just have five things, five points. And the first is you're not surprised that they're sinners.

sinners. You're not surprised that your little boy or your little girl is a big sinner.

You're not surprised when they're sinners. See, there's a certain way of when the law of this demand of, okay, I need to do this if I'm going to live, they need to do this, and that's the way to blessing.

That's simply, there's this way that addresses little children as if they don't have this huge sin problem, as if they really could do what you're asking. We can't be surprised that they're sinners. Their flesh, their little flesh, is as strong and as wicked as your flesh is, mom and dad. Their will outside of Jesus is just as enslaved as your will is.

[ 22 : 52 ] And we can't be shocked, mom and dad, when they're opposed to God's law. It makes sense. Obeying the law of God, it makes sense, it's the way to blessing, it's a good thing, and yet they don't do it, and we pour our lives into them, and we instruct them, and we teach them, and yet

they're still opposed to it.

We can't be surprised at that. That they won't submit, and Paul says they can't submit. The unfree will of children, of sinners, is something we need to desperately remember about our children. It's something our kids desperately need us to remember for, remember about them. And that little boy or girl that you love so much, that teenager that you love so much, if they are outside of Christ, they are trapped.

And that should arouse our compassion, not our scorn. Think about what it aroused in God's heart for us when we were enslaved.

It aroused compassion, and we see it in Jesus Christ. compassion that keeps us moving toward them with love, even in their sin, so we're moving toward them.

[ 24 : 24 ] Even when they're in their sin, we're moving toward them, we're moving toward them with love, we're moving toward them with hope, we're moving toward them with grace, we're moving toward them even in their sin, instead of this relations killing disappointment in them.

I can't believe you're doing that. I can't believe that this is happening. I can't believe this is how you're turning out. Well, why are we so surprised? Why are we so disappointed in them? Isn't it because we've forgotten that they're sinners just like us?

They didn't come with a heart that was ready to obey. They came just like us, with a heart that's bent on going its own way. And so, if we are surprised and then disappointed and then we step back and move back, that's so not what the gospel is.

So there's your teen and she is smoldering. Smoldering with resentment. She is resenting everything.

Everything you say, everything you do, she's resenting church. She's resenting your time on her hand, like you taking away her time and all her privileges. And she's smoldering with resentment.

[ 25 : 45 ] Now, most of her resentments are baseless. There's no logical, there's really nothing to them. But there she is. She's a cauldron of just angry thoughts.

And sometimes the cauldron just comes out and she splashes you and her siblings with the meanness and the anger on everybody. Now, the law says, well, that isn't right.

Stop it. Stop it. There's no reason you should be so angry. I don't get it. Quit it. You need to buck up. You need to change.

Just drop the attitude, Missy. Now, but the fact of the matter is, if she's enslaved, and it's so irrational, it so doesn't make any sense, it's so baseless, then we have to really say, she can't help herself.

And I'm not saying that as an excuse for her sin, or, oh, just let it go. But I am saying, this is what the bondage of the will actually looks like. This is what it means to be a slave to sin.

[ 27 : 01 ] You sin when it doesn't make any sense. You sin when it's not even good for you. You sin when there's no reason you ought to sin. And I think we need to realize that her flesh, that teenage girl's flesh, is as unreformable, as unwoo-able, you can't win it, and as unreasonable as your flesh is.

If you have been fighting some sin, and you say, it doesn't make sense that I do this, and it just doesn't change, it's so hard, it doesn't listen to reason, it doesn't listen to anything. Well, now you know what she, her life is, her heart is.

She's deeply wrong about so many things. And she needs help. And so mom and dads, if you think she's just free, and she's able to stop whenever she wants, and she can stop, she should be able to stop, if you believe that about her, you're going to say to yourself, can't she see what she's doing? Can't she see what he's doing? Can't she see what he's doing to us, to me? This isn't fair. Can't she see what he's doing to his siblings?

They don't deserve that. Can't she see what she's doing to herself? This is just eating her up. This is destroying her. And you say, I pointed out to her a thousand times. I've explained things.

[ 28 : 25 ] I've told her how skewed her perceptions are. There's no reason for this resentment. And I've told her plain as day, factually, how wrong she is, but she doesn't listen. She just goes on.

Angry and bitter. What's wrong with her? What's wrong with her? Can't she see that she's hurting me? Can't she see that she's hurting herself?

When you're surprised, and you expect them to just be able to stop anytime, and boy, if they don't, you're going to punish them in your mind, and you're going to punish them in your heart, and then you're going to punish them with your words, and you're going to punish them in your actions of, I'm

going to get this sin under control by just making it painful enough for them.

That's not grace. If you're parenting your children in the atmosphere of Jesus Christ, you're not surprised at that. You're not shocked.

Because that's where grace found us. That's where grace found us.

[ 29 : 39 ] That's where Jesus Christ came to us. When we were dead. Dead. Dead person is not able to obey.

When we were enslaved, and when we were hopeless, and when we were helpless, that's when the Father sent Jesus Christ full of grace and truth.

That's when he moved toward us in love. He wasn't shocked and appalled and kept his distance.

No, Jesus moved toward us with compassion. And parenting in the atmosphere of Jesus means we're going to do the same thing.

We're not shocked and put off and distance and now we're going to punish. No, we move toward him with compassion. So secondly, too, what does this grace-filled atmosphere look like? Well, you don't immediately pounce on them.

With that punishment that we talked about, that's what the law does when you're under law. So we have under law and under grace. And under law, all the law does is condemn you for every disobedience immediately.

[ 30 : 52 ] So we read it the last two Sundays in Romans chapter 5. Judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation. Adam didn't get a second chance.

He got one chance. And it, judgment followed. And then condemnation. And that's what parenting under the law with that looks like.

They sin and we punish. There's sin and there's condemnation. And when we're parenting in that spirit, we demand immediate obedience or we demand immediately they make it right or else.

Anything less than that is not good enough. Now, of course, that's completely understandable.

Understandable in some ways. The problem is not the desire for immediate obedience.

That's what we teach. Like, what does it look like to obey? It's right away, all the way with a happy heart. That's what obedience should be. That's the standard.

[ 31 : 54 ] That's what's right. That's what we, our expectation needs to be. The problem though, is the demand. This demand in our own hearts.

This demand. This is, they better get it right. And right now. So there's no room. Moms and dads, is there, is there any room in your heart for Colossians 3, 14.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy, and dearly loved, clothe yourself with compassion, and kindness, and humility, and gentleness, and patience.

Patience, gentleness, humility, compassion. That's how the Father treats us. He doesn't pounce on us.

But He does give us chance, after chance, to get it right, doesn't He? He gives us lots of redos, doesn't He? Where He takes us back, so to speak, to the scene of the crime.

[ 32 : 59 ] Takes us back to the beginning, where we went off the rails, and He says, now try it again, my dear. Try it again. And that's what kindness, and compassion, and patience looks like in parenting.

Not immediate pouncing, with anger, and judgment, but with, let's try it again. Grace is the Father, welcoming back the Son, just like what we read, and saying, let's start over you and I.

Isn't that what Luke 15, that's what the Father does, for that first Son. He basically says, let's start all over. Let's party. You have the ring, you have the robe, you have the sandals, you have everything.

We're just going to start all over. You're my son again. A redo. Three, if you're parenting in grace, in light of the gospel of Jesus Christ, you don't think all they need to do, is try harder.

You don't think all they need to do, is try harder. Now, moms and dads, I know you probably don't think that, when you're in your clear thinking mind. When you're sitting in church, and you're talking in Sunday school, you don't think, oh, what that child needs to do, is try harder, and they'll be okay.

[ 34 : 16 ] But, when you're in the heat of parenting, what do you think is going to fix your child? Is it for them to understand what is right, and then just to do it?

Is it a better system of rules, and expectations, and just more accountability, and more check marks, and rewards, or punishments? Is it for them to get what you're saying? Sometimes that's how I think.

If they would just understand, what I am saying, and why I'm saying this, then they would do it. This is a mental issue. It's a mental issue.

Do you ever say to them, will you ever learn? If you know what you're supposed to do, well then do it. What's wrong with you?

Is that all they need though? Better understanding? Clear expectations? Just do it. More accountability. Again, there is a place, let me say this, there is a place in grace-filled parenting for clear expectations, for holding someone accountable, for clear guidelines.

[ 35 : 26 ] There's a place for all that. But is that all we effectively think that they need? They just need this, and if they'll get it, they'll get it. And isn't that subtly undermining the gospel?

Isn't it? Because it's not just a matter of will. It's just not a matter of, give them the expectations, and then if they understand it well enough, they'll live up to it.

It's not a matter of, well, if you know it, then do it. That's where Paul says, if righteousness could come through the law, well, then Jesus Christ came for nothing.

There's no need for him. There's no need for grace. There's no need for him to die. And that's what I'm saying. Our kids need Jesus. They need grace.

They need his mercy. Your little child or your teenager, stuck in their sin, they really need rescue.

[ 36 : 31 ] Rescue from Jesus. They need a living, vital relationship with Jesus. They need to begin experiencing the grace of our Lord. And if they don't have them, if they don't have him, and if we leave him out of the heart of our parenting, if we leave Jesus out of the heart of our parenting, then we are going to insist on getting fruit off of a dead, burnout stump that can't give any fruit anyway.

And let me say this, your younger children might try for a long time, or for a while. They might try. Because they love you. But sooner or later, they'll give up in bitterness.

They'll give up in anger. They'll give up, and they'll be malicious towards you. Or they might soldier on. This can go two ways.

The prodigal son gave up. He just said, forget it. And he ran away because he thought all his father wanted was whatever. But then there's the older son.

And our kids might soldier on in hypocrisy. But either way, you won't have their heart. Either way, God won't have their hearts.

[ 37 : 54 ] So, Christian mom and dad, do you know that? That that ceaseless, graceless demand of the law doesn't actually help us to obey?

You know that. You know it because when you've been struggling with something and someone says, well, that's what you just need to do.

You know that that doesn't help at all. It doesn't actually give you any help to do it. Because it's only in this living relationship with the Lord Jesus that you do find help.

You do find that courage that you need to do it. Or you find that hope to do it. That you find the resources to do it through the Spirit. It's only when the Spirit comes and He makes us feel loved and feel accepted and feel like, hey, I'm the child of God.

That you begin to, and you're living in the goodness of the Gospel that you go out and you conquer sin. And you start obeying with a happy heart. It's only when God gives us that grace that we so desperately need that we start to, our lives start to change.

[ 39 : 05 ] And that's, see, the law demands and it's right to do so. But it doesn't actually give and nothing actually happens.

And that's what Paul is saying. Galatians 5, he says, it's the Spirit that gives life. And out of living in the Spirit, we begin to bear the fruit of the Spirit.

They need more than to try harder, mom and dad. And if you put them into that category, if you just got to try harder, but you don't give them the help they need, you're going to lose their hearts.

They're either going to become hypocrites or just in despair. They need grace. So what does raising your children in the training and instruction of the Lord look like? What's that atmosphere?

Well, fourth, it's living in the grace of the gospel yourself, moms and dads. You can't give what you don't have. You know, you just can't.

[ 40 : 13 ] You can't give what you don't have. You can't, you won't give what you aren't enjoying yourself. It's living in the freedom of the gospel yourself. That's where it's going to come from.

And specifically living in the freedom from, I don't know, didn't know exactly how to put this, but living in the freedom from the law of parenting. And this is what I mean by that.

Moms and dads, don't we so often feel righteous or feel guilty based on how good we are or we were as parents?

I can think of, I mean, it's not just something that, oh, I'm doing a good job. Sometimes it's, I know one older lady, I knew one older lady, who, that was a great part of her personal righteousness. I raised my kids right. I raised my kids right. And she thought that was her standing. When she thought of herself, that's what she thought of, that I'm a good mom.

[ 41 : 23 ] I'm a good mom. And so often I think we feel righteous or guilty based on how we do or we're doing as parents. And so we stand or we fall based on how our parenting turns out.

We live in self-righteous exaltation if all of our little troops are all in a nice little line and they're doing exactly what they're supposed to do. They're a reflection of our goodness as parents. So we think. They're not a reflection of God's mercy and grace in our life to desperately or to rescue what desperately needed to be saved. No, it's a reflection of me. Or we live in guilty regret or bitterness and we say God is so unfair when instead of having the happy little troops I have the prodigal children.

I didn't raise them that way. So we're mad at God. We're disappointed in ourselves or whatever. We're living in this guilty regret and our best parenting didn't turn out how we wanted it. And that too really is a very anti-gospel way of living with God. God doesn't owe us good children. Our best parenting doesn't somehow demand that God give us what we want.

[ 42 : 45 ] And on the other hand, the Father doesn't love us and accept us because we're good parents. He doesn't love you and accept you because of your parenting.

You're standing with Him. Your status as a dearly loved child doesn't come from your parenting excellence or your parenting failures.

It comes from Jesus. It really does. It's all from Him. If our parenting could save us, then Jesus died for nothing. There would be no reason at all for Him to go to the cross if I could just be a good enough parent and God loves me that way.

And grace is unnecessary. But you know what? You and I need grace. We need mercy. We need forgiveness. And Jesus Christ, you know what? He comes to parents full of grace and truth when they've messed up.

And He loves you still. Your parenting hasn't turned His heart away. Your parenting hasn't turned His loving affection away from you. Your parenting hasn't changed His determination to do you good, to turn all of your failures into something good.

[ 44 : 00 ] You know, He loves you, moms and dads, like you were the perfect parent. He loves you like you were the perfect parent.

That's what it means to be in Christ. Because everything true about Jesus gets imputed to us. God gives to us. That's what it means to be justified. All of Jesus' righteousness just is counted as ours. And so He loves you.

He accepts you and He welcomes you like you were the perfect parents. Why? Not because you were. Not at all. But for Jesus' sake.

He looks on our parenting record, Christian, mom, dad, He looks on your parenting record and says, for Jesus' sake, there is no sin here. You didn't mess up at all.

[ 45 : 05 ] What good parents you are. He treats us like Jesus. He treats us like in Luke 15. Jesus does show up in that passage. He's the father. He's the father that throws open his arms in loving welcome.

He's the father that goes out and patiently deals with his older son. He's this perfect father. We want to be parents like Jesus, don't we?

That's the kind of parents we want to be. And for Jesus' sake, that's exactly what happens in the gospel. He counts Jesus' righteousness as ours. He says, this is what you've done when we didn't do it.

But for Jesus' sake, he says, this is what you've done. This is what he's done for you. That's the gospel for parents. And so you want to parent in grace? Well, live in that grace, moms and dads. Live in that undeserved favor of God.

Drink it and believe it. For Jesus' sake, God has counted you as the perfect mom or dad. Your parenting record has been washed clean because of the blood of the lamb.

[ 46 : 13 ] All my parenting sins, and there are many, and all of your parenting sins, and they may be less than mine, but I'm sure there's some there. It's been washed away, and it's been filled with

the righteousness of Jesus Christ, who is that perfect father in the parable.

That's the grace of God. That's God's, that's how, he's welcoming you, he's accepting you, he's living with you on those terms. And so that's grace. Now, live in it and give it to your kids.

So fifth and last, in the atmosphere of grace, you're going to communicate grace to them. So this follows on what I just said. So if you're living in this grace, if you're living in this wonder of being loved, and given what you didn't have for Jesus' sake, you're going to communicate undeserving one-way love to them.

That's what you received, isn't it? God gave you undeserved one-way love. It wasn't about you loving him, it was about him loving you. And we only love him because he first loved us.

And so he comes with grace, giving us one-way undeserved love. And when you start living out of that, that's what you start giving to your children. So you do it, dads.

[ 47 : 37 ] Dads. You do it by staying engaged with those teenagers who you don't feel like you can relate to very well anymore. You're staying with them. You're not checking out.

You're not disappearing. You're there, you're engaged. And so when your teenage boy is struggling and feeling despair and rebellious and there he is all in black and he is angry and you're going to stay with him, part of you is going to say, no, the best thing to do is to punish him until he gets his act together.

The thing to do is you stay away with it. I'm going to move away until he gets his act together. No, you move toward him. You won't berate him when this isn't right.

What's wrong with you? You weren't raised this way. You'll move in. You'll move in. And you'll sit down beside him.

and you'll say, I love you. I love you. And I'm still crazy about you. And I'm here. I'm here.

[ 48 : 52 ] I'm with you. Dads, don't exasperate them. Give them Jesus. Show them Jesus.

You know, Jesus went up to naked, angry, furious, demon-possessed men. And he rescued them. He didn't move away. He moved toward.

So, dads, when your teenage girl is living and dying by the law of how you look, and everything in our culture is telling her pretty girls are worth more.

Pretty girls are worth more. And she is dying every day she looks in the mirror. Dads, you can't check out. She needs you.

And she needs you to give her the grace of Jesus. She needs you to throw your arms around her and say, you are beautiful. And I do love you. She needs to hear about a Savior who saves sinners.

[ 50 : 03 ] Who saves sinners. And instead of treating them like the ugly ducklings that they were, he died for them like they were beautiful princesses.

Because we weren't beautiful people. We weren't beautiful princesses worthy of someone dying for us. We were ugly. But he died for us like we were beautiful.

And in dying for us, he made us beautiful. And in treating us like we were beautiful and worth something, we became beautiful. And we become beautiful. And we become worthy. And so, give your daughter that kind of grace.

That doesn't treat them like the world treats them, but treats them with one-way undeserved love.

So, moms and dads, your kids need you to give them that grace.

In your words, just in your presence, just sitting and being with them, your mental presence, your spiritual presence with them, in your open arms.

[ 51 : 14 ] They need you to live in the grace of Jesus yourself. And then let that spring overflow into their lives. Because that's really how we end up relating best to our children is when it's not just me, or it's not just them, it's all of us saying, it's another's life, another's death.

It's not about them being perfect kids, or me being a perfect parent. It's not about them finally living up to what is right, or me finally living up to doing what I know I should do.

But it's another's life. death. It's another's death. And it's Jesus from first to last. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you that even though you gave that perfect law that is right and holy and just and good and should be obeyed, and when it was weakened and powerless because of the flesh.

It could bring no righteousness in our lives. It only could bring death and condemnation because we had broken it and broken it so finely and thoroughly and completely and in a way that we could never even fix.

[ 52 : 48 ] you sent your son full of grace and truth. I pray that you would warm our hearts with that kind of love.

You would warm our hearts with the recognition of our unworthiness and yet your great love for us. I pray especially for the moms and dads here who are in the heat of it.

give them help, Holy Spirit. Help them to live as dearly loved children themselves and so to parent out of that grace. I also pray for the older parents who the bulk of the work is now over and there might be a temptation to pride there, there might be real regret and despair.

Lord, I pray that you would turn both of their eyes off of themselves, and on to Jesus and to exalt and rest only in him. I do pray for our children that we would be spokesmen and ambassadors to them of Jesus Christ and the gospel and the way that we act toward them and the way that we love them and the way that we hang in there with them, the way that we give them grace when so much of our heart is saying let him have it.

Please help us to be like Jesus in this. Pray for our good and I pray for your glory. And it's in Jesus' name I do pray.

[ 54 : 29 ] Amen.