



# CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT OF GRACE

## I. INTRODUCTION

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### Resources

*Grace Based Parenting* by Tim Kimmel

*Raising Kids for True Greatness* by Tim Kimmel

*The Danger of Raising Nice Kids* by Timothy Smith

## II. THE PARENTING CHALLENGE

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### THE GOAL OF PARENTING

What are our ultimate goals in parenting our children?

Eph 3:14-19, For this reason I kneel before the Father, **from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name**. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

**GOAL:** through gospel-centered parenting that our children may know the fullness of God's love for them and grow in the likeness of Christ to the glory of God.

What is the picture of God and discipleship that we are giving our children?

Luke 9:23-25, Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?"

### THE DISCONNECTION PROBLEM

Robert Shaw, Parents find themselves enslaved by a materialistic, overarching society that leads them to spend so many hours at work and so much money that they can't make the time to do the things necessary to bond with their children.

Timothy Smith, Our culture is obsessed with perfection: perfect babies, intelligent preschoolers, kindergartners who speak French, third-graders who know algebra, fifth-graders who make the all-star club team in soccer, eighth-

graders who spend their Saturday's in SAT prep courses. ... We pass on our competitive nature to our kids. We strive to give our children every advantage. We want our daughters to excel at science and math and show the boys they can. We want our sons to "reach their full potential" in all areas and still be in touch with their feminine side. We see ourselves as winners. In a way, it's a redux of social Darwinism-only the strong survive. In order to be fit and survive, we need to have advantages over the weak.

We're a generation who is investing more money and effort into our kids than any other generation, but also failing at some of the deepest levels in truly parenting our children.

## DISCIPLING OUR CHILDREN

In essence, parenting is discipleship. We are discipling our children whether we want to or not.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Are there any ways that your love for your children has crossed over into idolatry of your family?
2. What are some values that your children have "caught" from you?

## FEAR-BASED PARENTING

Much of parenting in Christian homes is based on a fear.

Timothy Smith, I think many parents in our culture are driven by fear. Fear that something bad will happen to their kids. Fear that they will not give their kids the right blend of enrichment experiences. Fear that they will raise kids with weak self-esteem.

## FEAR OF THE WORLD

The biggest problem with this approach to parenting is the failure to realize that the biggest problem is not the "world out there," but the sin right inside your child's own heart.

The other problem with this approach to parenting is the failure to raise children who are equipped to win the world for Christ.

Tim Kimmel, Fear-based parenting is the surest way to create intimidated kids. It's also the surest way to raise Christian kids who either don't have any passion for lost people, are indifferent to the things of God, or out-and-out rebel against their parents, their church, and the Lord.

## FEAR OF EMBARRASSMENT

But the problem with this approach to parenting is that it sends the message to our children that being good is about displaying good behaviors, and that how you are viewed by others is more important than how God views you.

## HIGH-CONTROL PARENTING

Tim Kimmel, There is a vast difference between parents who keep their children *under* control and parents who control *them*. High-control parenting happens when we leverage the strength of our personality or our position against our children's weaknesses to get them to meet our selfish agenda. This form of parenting is fueled by a combination of toxic fear, toxic anger, toxic bondage, toxic shame, and toxic strength. What's sad is how prevalent this form of parenting is in Christian homes. ... High-control parents are blind to how they are treating their children because high-controllers can always morally justify every move they make. Because they are so convinced that their controlling tendency is right, they can't see how destructive its effect is on their children.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the ways in which you've allowed your fears to drive your parenting? How has this affected your children?
2. What are some ways in which you may be exhibiting an unhealthy level of control over your children?

## PARENTING BY GRACE

Colossians 2:6-10, 20-23; 3:1-3, So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, 7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. 8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. 9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10 and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. ... 20 Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: 21 “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? 22 These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. 23 Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

At the heart of parenting in grace is to treat our children in the same way that God, our heavenly Father, treats us—forgiving, accepting, and loving us unconditionally.

Tim Kimmel, The difference with grace-based families is that they don't bother spending much time putting fences up because they know full well that sin is already present and accounted for inside their family. To these types of parents, sin is not an *action* or an *object* that penetrates their defenses; it is a preexisting condition that permeates their being. The graceless home requires kids to be good and gets angry and punishes them when they are bad. The grace-based home assumes kids will struggle with sin and helps them learn how to tap into God's power to help them get stronger. ... When their children do sin, grace-based parents don't get surprised. They expect it. They assume that sin is an ongoing dilemma that their children must constantly contend with.

Parenting in grace is also to ultimately put our trust in God's care over our children, not on any techniques for parenting.

A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, he leads out the prisoners with singing;" -Psalm 68:5-6

## THE FREEDOM TO BE DIFFERENT

When your children are young, this usually isn't much of an issue, but as you begin to see your child's unique personality emerge it may become a real struggle to accept the person they are becoming.

To parent in grace is to accept and celebrate the unique ways in which God has made your child.

1 Samuel 16:7, But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."

## THE FREEDOM TO BE HONEST AND VULNERABLE

Parenting in grace is to create a home in which our children can be honest and vulnerable and know that they won't be judged or rejected.

Psalm 103:8-10, The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. 9 He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; 10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

Tim Kimmel, Grace-based families make room for their kids' opinions. They provide a safe forum in which to air their doubts, disappointments, and even their misguided beliefs. They especially provide an outlet for candor when their children's faith is on trial. Strident, unadaptable Christian homes have no clue what this looks like. They have rules that have to be kept and an image that has to be propped up.

Just as he does with adults, God is going to allow circumstances in your child's life as opportunities to learn to trust in him.

We need to establish this channel of honest communication early.

Showing grace to a child is to dignify their questions, fears, and concerns no matter how insignificant they may appear to us.

The openness and honesty that we establish has to include the problems that they have with us as parents.

Tim Kimmel, The most significant benefit of candor for our children can be the most painful to us. This happens when we allow our children to be forthright regarding how they feel about us. Most parents don't even give their children this option. Children in these types of homes are quick to figure out that their mother and father aren't interested in hearing their feelings about them. They aren't looking for an authentic relationship at the heart level with their children.

## THE FREEDOM TO FAIL

To parent in grace is to allow your children to fail without condemning them for it.

Tim Kimmel, Your children's propensity toward sin shouldn't surprise you; it shouldn't threaten you; and it shouldn't even really *bother* you. You know you've given birth to sinners, children just like the parents who sired them. You realize that your children have a bent toward selfishness, stubbornness, and lawlessness—exactly the kind of people Christ loves and for whom He died. By acknowledging your children's bent toward sin from the outset, you can encourage your children to struggle with their sin out in the open where you can talk about it and direct them to the power of Christ. And when the children are actually sinning, grace makes it easy for you to have open, candid, and vulnerable discussions about these areas where they struggle. Your children will be able to talk with you about their internal battles with jealousy, lust, greed, or anger. You should be able to talk openly and honestly about sin because you're so aware that you and your spouse are sinners, too.

Parental condemnation undercuts the very process of repentance that God wants to use to change your child's heart.

Hebrews 12:10-11, Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Parenting in grace is to discipline our children now so that they will not have to experience the much more painful consequences of their choices later in life.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Which of the freedoms (freedom to be different ...to be honest and vulnerable ...to fail) do you find easiest to demonstrate to your children? Most difficult?
2. What are some of the convictions that you will take home from the seminar?

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Part of parenting in grace to have the humility to receive God's grace for our continual failures as parents.

Without trust in God, parenting in grace feels too weak.