

PARENTING BY THE BOOK

GRACE

1. REVIEW: GRACE

A. **Ephesians 2:8-10 (NASB)** For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift (GRACE IS A GIFT... BUT IT MUST BE OPENED) of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

B. **PRINCIPLE:** God never calls us to a task without giving us what we need to do it. He never sends us without going with us.

1. GOD DOESN'T ALWAYS CALL THE EQUIPPED... BUT HE ALWAYS EQUIPS THE CALLED... IF WE ASK HIM, AND ALLOW HIM TO DO SO.

C. Many, many fathers and mothers carry a **PARTICULAR PROBLEM** into their **PARENTING**, and **THEY DO NOT KNOW IT**.

1. WHAT IS THIS SILENT, BUT DEADLY, PROBLEM THAT AFFECTS SO MANY PARENTS?..... Far TOO MANY CHRISTIAN PARENTS have a **HUGE GAP** in their UNDERSTANDING and RELIANCE ON GOD'S GRACE.

a. THERE IS NOTHING MORE IMPORTANT to CONSISTENT, FAITHFUL, PATIENT, LOVING, AND EFFECTIVE PARENTING THAN TO UNDEstand WHAT GOD HAS GIVEN US IN GRACE THROUGH HIS SON, the LORD JESUS CHTIST.

b. UNDERSTANDING GOD'S GRACE WILL CHANGE US, AND AS IT CHANGES US, IT WILL CHANGE THE WAY WE PARENT OUR CHILDREN.

D. Like everything else GOD CALLS PEOPLE TO DO... **GOD DOES NOT CALL US TO BE PARENTS BECAUSE WE ARE ABLE**.

1. PEOPLE IN THE BIBLE WHO WERE **NOT ABLE....**

a. **Noah** wasn't able.

b. **Abraham** wasn't able.

c. **Moses** wasn't able.

d. **Gideon** wasn't able.

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- e. David wasn't able.
 - f. The disciples weren't able,
 - g. AND NEITHER ARE WE!
 - h. ABLE PEOPLE JUST DO NOT EXIST... AND THEY CERTAINLY DO NOT EXIST AS PARENTS!
2. God did NOT create human beings to be INDEPENDENTLY ABLE... HE DESIGNED US TO BE DEPENDANT... ON HIM!
- a. So QUIT BEAING YOURSELF UP because you feel INADEQUATE as a PARENT... you feel that way BECAUSE IT IS TRUE!
- E. WHY WOULD A GOD of PERFECT WISDOM ASK INADEQUATE PEOPLE TO DO SUCH AN IMPORTANT JOB AS PARENTING?
- 1. The ANSWER is VERY IMPORTANT for us to grasp....
 - 2. GOD CALLS UNABLE PEOPLE to do IMPORTANT THINGS because ultimately HE IS NOT working on OUR IMMEDIATE SUCCESS, BUT that we would COME TO RELY ON HIM, KNOW HIM, to LOVE HIM, to REST IN HIS GRACE, and LIVE FOR HIS GLORY.
 - 3. Let me put it a different way... God calls UNABLE PEOPLE to DO IMPORTANT THINGS LIKE PARENTING so that HE WILL GET HE GLORY... and NOT US.
 - 4. GOD isn't working so that our life as a PARENT WILL be EASY, PREDICTIBLE, AND FREE FROM STRUGGLE.
 - 5. HE CALLS US to do the IMPOSSIBLE so that in our SEARCH FOR HELP, WE WILL FIND MORE THAN HELP... WE WILL FIND HIM!
- F. OUR INABILITY is NOT THE DESTRUCTION OF OUR PARENTING, BECAUSE GOD HELPS PARENTS WHO HUMBLY ADMIT THEIR WEKNESSES AND RUN TO HIM FOR HELP.

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G. Ephesians 3:20-21 (NASB) Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

1. Here is the **SINGLE REDEMPTIVE REALITY THAT MAKES PARENTING POSSIBLE: GOD IN US!**

a. The apostle Paul says that we don't really UNDERSTAND WHO WE ARE AS PARENTS and WHAT WE'VE BEEN GIVEN UNTIL WE UNDERSTAND this **AMAZING THING:**

1) **THAT GOD KNEW OUR CALLING AS PARENTS WOULD BE SO HUGE AND OUR WAKNESS SO DEEP THAT THE ONLY THING THAT WOULD HELP US WAS HIMSELF.**

b. So in an **ACT OF INCREDIBLE GRACE**, he has unbuttoned us and gotten inside of us through THE **HOLY SPIRIT**.

2. Now **THINK ABOUT THAT AS A PARENT:**

a. **GOD who HAS THE ABILITY TO DO THINGS THAT ARE WAY BEYOND OUR ABILITY TO CONCEIVE... WHO HAS PERFECT WISDOM AND UNLIMITED POWER... LIVES INSIDE OF US!!!**

H. **WE really ARE NOT LEFT TO OURSELVES TO PARENT ALONE.**

1. **THE QUESTION IS: WILL WE REMEMBER THAT GOD IS IN US... SO THAT WE DO NOT HAVE TO PARENT ALONE?**

I. **GOD'S GRACE WORKS TO OPEN OUR EYES TO SEE OURSELVES AS PARENTS ACCURATELY.**

1. HE USES THINGS like our MARRIAGES and our PARENTING to EXPOSE OUR HEARTS TO US.

2. HERE IS THE HUMBLING CONCLUSION THAT GOD, IN HIS GRACE, LEADS US TO:

a. WE ARE **MORE LIKE OUR CHILDREN** THAN **UNLIKE THEM.**

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b. The REALITY IS THAT THERE ARE FEW STRUGGLES IN THE LIVES OF OUR CHILDREN THAT ARE NOT IN OUR LIVES AS WELL...

- 1) materialism,
- 2) relationship problems,
- 3) wanting my own way,
- 4) attraction to the world,
- 5) subtle idolatries,
- 6) etc.

3. THAT ADMISSION SHOULD TRANSFORM OUR PARENTING

a. INSTEAD OF APPROACHING OUR CHILDREN with SELF-RIGHTEOUS ANGER, WE SHOULD MOVE TOWARD THEM AS A SINNER IN NEED OF GRACE NEEDING TO CONFRONT A SINNER IN NEED OF GRACE.

J. GOD'S PLAN: IS TO MAKE HIS INVISIBLE GRACE VISIBLE TO OUR CHILDREN BY SENDING PARENTS OF GRACE TO GIVE GRACE TO CHILDREN WHO DESPERATELY NEED GRACE.

1. AND... PARENTS WHO KNOW THEY NEED GRACE TEND TO WANT TO GIVE GRACE TO THEIR CHILDREN WHO ARE JUST LIKE THEM.

K. GOD'S GRACE FREES US FROM HAVING TO DENY OUR WEAKNESSES.

1. HERE IS WHAT THAT MEANS TO US AS PARENTS... GOD NEVER ASKS US TO ACT IN OUR ROLE AS PARENTS TO BE SOMETHING THAT WE ARE NOT.

a. WE DO NOT HAVE TO FEAR BEING EXPOSED AS LESS THAN PERFECT BECAUSE THERE IS NOTHING THAT COULD EVER BE KNOWN OR EXPOSED ABOUT US AS PARENTS THAT HAS NOT ALREADY BEEN COVERED BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS.

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- 1) **QUESTION: DO YOU BELIEVE THAT?**
 2. **HUMBLE**, confessing PARENTS encourage their CHILDREN to be **HUMBLE** and confessing too, and **THE RESULT IS THAT THEY HAVE MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO DISCUSS THE RESCUING LOVE OF JESUS WITH THEIR CHILDREN.**
- L. **GOD'S GRACE RESCUES US FROM OURSELVES.**
1. **WHEN WE** are frustrated, mad, discouraged, unkind, abusive, bitter, joyless, vengeful, or irritated as a parent,
 - a. **WE DO NOT NEED TO BE RESCUED FROM OUR CHILDREN...**
 - b. **WE NEED TO BE RESCUED FROM OURSELVES.**
 2. **EXAMPLE: SHAKEN BOTTLE OF WATER.**
 - a. **WHY** did **WATER** splash out of the BOTTLE?
 - 1) Because **WATER** was IN the BOTTLE.
 - b. It is very IMPORTANT for PARENTS to understand, and humbly admit, that WHEN WE ARE **SHAKEN** by the sin, weakness, rebellion, foolishness, or failure of our **CHILDREN...**
 - 1) **WHAT COMES OUT OF US (WORDS, ACTIONS, ATTITUDES) IS WHAT WAS ALREADY INSIDE US.**
 - c. **This means that our BIGGEST ONGOING PROBLEM AS A PARENT is NOT OUR CHILDREN... IT IS US.**
 - 1) **OUR CHILDREN DO NOT CAUSE US to DO and SAY what we DO and SAY.**
 - 2) **NO... THE CAUSE of OUR ACTIONS is FOUND INSIDE OUR OWN HEARTS.**
 - d. If WE **BLAME OUR CHILDREN** FOR OUR ATTITUDES, ACTIONS, AND WORDS...
 - 1) **NOT ONLY WILL WE MAKE THEM BITTER,**
 - 2) **BUT IN BLAMING THEM...**

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- i. WE WILL ALSO FAIL TO REACH OUT FOR THE HELP THAT COULD BE OURS IN THE RESCUING, FORGIVING, TRANSFORMING GRACE OF JESUS.
 - ii. AND... BECAUSE WE SHIFT THE BLAME, WE WILL FAIL TO GROW AS PARENTS.
 - iii. IN ADDITION, WE WILL REPEAT THE SAME PATTERNS OVER AND OVER AGAIN.
- e. WHEN WE ARE WILLING TO CONFESS THAT WE MAY BE THE BIGGEST PROBLEM IN OUR PARENTING...
- 1) WE are on the road to very **POSITIVE THINGS FOR OURSELVES** and in our work with our **CHILDREN**.

M. **GOD'S GRACE CHANGES US AS PARENTS.**

- 1. Here's what you and I should **NEVER FORGET**:

- a. AS WE SEEK TO PARENT OUR CHILDREN, OUR HEAVENLY FATHER IS PARENTING EVERYONE IN THE ROOM.
- b. GOD HAS NOT ONLY SENT US TO DO HIS WORK IN THE LIVES OF OUR CHILDREN:

- 1) HE WILL USE THE LIVES OF OUR CHILDREN TO ADVANCE HIS WORK IN US... IF WE WILL LET HIM!

- 2) **Psalm 103:13 (NASB)** Just as a father has compassion on *his* children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.

N. **GOD'S GRACE WILL WORK TO MAKE OUR HEARTS TENDER... IF WE WILL ALLOW HIM TO.**

- 1. HARD-HEARTED PARENTS THINK THEY ARE ALMOST ALWAYS RIGHT,
 - a. AND BECAUSE THEY DO, THEY DO NOT FEEL THE NEED TO CHANGE AND GROW.
 - b. SO THEY REPEAT THE SAME BAD PATTERNS AGAIN AND AGAIN.
- 2. This sets up **UNNECESSARY TENSION** WITH THEIR CHILDREN BECAUSE THEY ARE REQUIRING THEIR CHILDREN TO MAKE CHANGES BUT...
 - a. THEY DO NOT HOLD THEMSELVES TO THE SAME STANDARD.

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- b. SOOO... THEY WILL YELL at their children to STOP YELLING, BUT FAIL TO CONFESS THAT THEY YELL WHEN THEY SHOULDN'T.
 - c. THEY WILL DEMAND that their CHILDREN STOP FIGHTING, BUT THEY WILL FIGHT WITH THEIR CHILDREN AND THEIR SPOUSES WHEN THEY SHOULDN'T.
 - d. THEY WILL REQUIRE THEIR CHILDREN TO BE KIND, BUT THEY SPEAK AND ACT TOWARD THEIR SPOUSES AND THEIR CHILDREN IN WAYS THAT ARE UNKIND.
3. CHILDREN begin to LOSE RESPECT for PARENTS WHO ARE CONTENT WITH A "DO WHAT I SAY AND NOT AS I DO" RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR CHILDREN.
4. GOD WILL USE THE HAMMER OF HIS GRACE TO TENDERIZE US, SO THAT WE WILL BE A PART OF WHAT HE IS SEEKING TO DO IN OUR CHILDREN and NOT STAND IN THE WAY OF IT.
5. GOD is SOFTENING OUR HEARTS so we can be a TOOL OF HEART CHANGE in the lives of THOSE HE HAS PLACED IN OUR CARE.
6. DISCUSS: PARENTS SHOULD BE AGENTS OF CHANGE... NOT CHANGE AGENTS.
- O. GOD'S GRACE LIBERATES US FROM THE PRISON OF REGRET.
- 1. The ISSUE here is NOT WHETHER WE REMEMBER THE MISTAKES OF THE PAST DAYS OF OUR PARENTING.
 - a. THE ISSUE IS, ARE WE EMOTIONALLY AND SPIRITUALLY PARALYZED BY THEM in a way that makes it HARD FOR US TO DO WHAT GOD IS CALLING US TO DO IN THE PRESENT?
 - 2. AS WE PARENT TODAY, WE are INVITED to REMEMBER that WE ARE NOT ALONE AS WE PARENT OUR CHILDREN.
 - a. SOMEONE ELSE walks the hallways and stands in the family room with you.
 - b. SOMEONE ELSE walks with you as you enter your teenager's room to confront him about something he did.
 - c. SOMEONE ELSE is with you as you relive the events of the day before you fall asleep, preparing to face another parenting day.
 - d. SOMEONE ELSE is with you as you get up, already exhausted as usual, before the sun rises.

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3. THE ONE WHO CALLED YOU TO THIS VERY IMPORTANT JOB OF PARENTING IS WITH YOU, AND BECAUSE HE IS... THERE IS HOPE!
 - a. "BECAUSE HE LIVES"