

Am I a Bad Mom?

“How do you tell the difference between a phase or just bad parenting?”

“I hate being a hard parent.”

“I go to bed every single night feeling unequipped and ashamed at the fact that I haven’t parented with enough integrity. I wish I had more tools.”

These are statements that came from parents at our recent “Marriage and Parent Summit” at Faith Promise Church. I appreciate the rawness of these confessions. And I value a faith community that allows someone the room to be so very transparent.

As I read each phrase, a single theme echoes beneath the surface: *I’m scared. What if I mess this up? This is too important to mess up.*

As a parent along the journey, I want to say, “I get it!” I understand the angst of growing into the parent I want to be. I identify with the fear of failing as a parent. And I have to remind myself often of God’s promise that He is faithful to complete the work He began in me.

I invited my friend, Katie Linkous, to speak into the statements expressed above and the underlying fear they represent. As a mom of four, Katie weathers her fair share of parenting challenges. Listen to her wise perspective on overcoming the fears of parenting failure:

Who defines what good parents look like? Today, there are many voices sharing their opinions on how the task of parenting should be tackled. It is easy to get lost in all of the theories and methods that we have access to. It’s likely you feel unequipped, despite all of the books you have read. It’s

easy to become fearful of messing up.

The mistake we make as parents is buying into the idea that raising kids takes a separate manual. Our kids are truly just adults in training. We can use the same instructions to raise them that we are using for our own lives. The more we apply truth in raising our kids, the less challenging parenting will be.

If you are a believer, you have wisdom living inside you. It was by wisdom that God created (Prov. 3:19). Drawing from wisdom, whether by the Holy Spirit speaking directly to your heart about a situation with your child or from the written Word, will remove the questions from parenting.

I can read books and surround myself with godly influences, but ultimately, I have to trust that God chose me to be the mother of my children. Because He chose me, He is also equipping me on a continual basis to train my children in the way they should go so that they will not depart from it (Prov. 22:6)!

Questions about discipline, integrity, life skills, time management—all of these have answers in Jesus. Scripture tells us that even when we are weak and don't know how to pray for what we need, the Spirit is interceding on our behalf (Rom. 8:26). There isn't anyone in the world with all the answers on how to raise your kids.

Look to heaven, trust the Holy Spirit in you, search out Scripture, and act on what the Lord teaches you. Faith without action is useless. When the Lord reveals truth to you, you have a responsibility as a parent to act on that, even if it's hard. Trust that He will give you strength when you grow tired (Is. 40:29) and that your hard work will produce good fruit.

Consider a few action steps that will equip you to choose truth and move away from fear:

- **Read Proverbs.** Choose a 31-day reading plan that leads you through the book of Proverbs. Highlight and memorize those that have an “if, then” formula. Proverbs is filled with promises. If you take a certain action, you will gain a desired outcome. For example, Proverbs 8:33 promises, “Listen to discipline, and become wise.” If your desire is to become wise, then you must learn from discipline. Though there is wisdom to absorb throughout Scripture, a solid first step is Proverbs.
- **Find a mentor.** There is likely a parent that you admire. Maybe their kids are older than yours and you see in their kids what you desire to see in yours. Seek out that parent and learn from them. Compile a list of specific questions and find out how they parent and lead their family.
- **Narrow your need.** Sometimes one problem can overtake your perspective. Things may not be as bad as they seem. If you’re struggling with fear, pinpoint the fear and apply focused prayer toward it. Take specific, intentional steps toward a remedy. You won’t regret the time you invest, but you will regret the time you don’t.

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