

Finding God's Grace in Our Parenting Mistakes

With two kids in college and one in high school, I frequently catch myself pondering the past or musing about the future.

I feel happy about the things I did right as a parent, and I wince when I think of my mistakes.

One day I asked my oldest son this question, "Jake, what was the one thing I did most right in raising you? And what was my biggest mistake?"

His reply surprised me. *"Mom, you were the best mom in the world to me. You had a super high standard in the things of faith, integrity, and respect. And yet, you gave us room to breathe and didn't expect us to be perfect to make you look good. Your biggest mistake? Well, I would say it was the way you beat yourself up when you made a mistake. Mom, we love God, we love each other, and we really love you and dad. We have everything we need. We've had a great life."*

He was right. My problem was never in admitting my mistake, it was more so in my capacity for condemnation.

Not always, but sometimes it took me longer than necessary to let myself off the hook and accept God's gracious forgiveness for the times I'd blown it.

God makes provision for our weaknesses, which is a blessed, wonderful thing.

Just as He is perfectly happy to give our kids room to grow, He also gives *us* room to grow.

Most of the time we learn from our mistakes and we're better because of them.

As our kids approach their teen years, they also need some room to grow, room to breathe, and room to make a few mistakes that they might learn some valuable lessons while they're still under our care.

While we can get away with controlling our toddler (and we should); trying to do the same thing to a teenager will surely backfire. I'm convinced that our kids will actually lose their confidence if we insist on controlling every choice they make.

As parents of teens, we need to be more involved than ever, but our strategy must change.

When they're young, it's important to carefully guide our children in the matters of right and wrong.

When they're older, it's still important, but they have to be allowed to feel a few consequences while they are still under our roof.

These are great things to learn while still living at home:

- If I stay up too late, I am exhausted the next day.
- If I don't study for a test, I will probably fail.
- If I eat all the wrong things, I will feel toxic and crummy for a couple of days.
- If I spend my money on something useless, I won't have it when the right thing comes along.
- If I dent up the car, I have to pay for it.
- If I am continually late for work, I'll eventually get fired.

I know these are tough lessons to step back and let our kids learn, but what a powerful learning tool life experiences can be!

God's always gracious, abounding in love. He does not repay as us our sins deserve. He forgives our sins and lifts us up again. Wide is the path of grace beneath our feet and abundant

are His promises. There is no condemnation for us because we are in Him.

Whether you are a parent of teens or simply someone who needs a reminder: It's true that God will not be mocked. What we sow is what we will grow. If we consistently make wrong choices, our lives will be consistently messy. But if we are sincerely following after the Lord, He will establish His purposes for us.

When we make mistakes, we'll find grace; we'll find forgiveness.

When our kids make mistakes; we extend the same thing to them that we've received from *Him*.

When we parent our children the way God has parented us, we are as effective as we can be.

Susie Larson is an author, speaker and radio host for KTIS in Minnesota and Focus on the Family. Visit Susie's web site at [www.susielarson.com](#).