



# When Parenting Teens Gets Messy





# Welcome!



Thank you for taking the time to attend this year's Counseling & Discipleship Training. We recognize the sacrifice it takes to be able to participate in a conference like this and we're grateful for the opportunity to host and serve you each weekend.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 tells us, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." We have received much grace, and it is our joy to pass on what we have been freely given!

Our prayer is that your walk with the Lord is strengthened and challenged, equipping you to be able to walk with others in grace and truth—to the praise of His glory!

If you have questions or need some assistance, look for people in shirts that say "SERVE." They are servant-leaders of GFC and would be happy to assist you in any capacity.



**Dr Mark Shaw**  
*Director of Counseling*  
Grace Fellowship Church

## Reminders

- Sessions will begin promptly
- Wear your lanyard
- Wi-Fi: GracePublic
- Bring a light jacket or sweater

**Grace Fellowship Church  
CDT Advanced  
When Parenting Teens Gets Messy  
September 2022  
Worship Center**

**Friday, September 16**

Time	Title	Speaker
5:00 - 5:05 pm	<b>Welcome, Intro, Prayer</b>	Todd Richmond
5:05 - 6:05 pm	Counseling Adolescents	Peter LaRuffa
<b>6:05-6:20 pm</b>	<b>BREAK</b>	
6:20 - 7:20 pm	Facing the Storms of Destruction, Part 1	Rick Horne
<b>7:20 - 7:35 pm</b>	<b>BREAK</b>	
7:35 - 8:35 pm	Desperate Parents Make the Best Parents	Brad Bigney
<b>8:35 - 8:45 pm</b>	<b>BREAK</b>	
8:45 - 9:45 pm	Panel Discussion with Salem4Youth	Terry Bengel, Salem4Youth team, and Mark Shaw
<b>9:45 pm</b>	<b>DISMISS</b>	

**Saturday, September 17**

Time	Title	Speaker
<b>8:00 - 8:05 am</b>	<b>Welcome &amp; Prayer</b>	
8:05 -9:05 am	Facing the Storms of Destruction Part 2	Rick & Betty Horne
<b>9:05-9:25 am</b>	<b>BREAK</b>	
9:25-10:25 am	Hope & Help for Hurting Parents Part 1	Brad Bigney
<b>10:25-10:45 am</b>	<b>BREAK</b>	
10:45-11:45 am	Hope & Help for Hurting Parents Part 2	Brad Bigney
<b>11:45-1:00 pm</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>	<b>*On Your Own*</b>
1:00-2:00 pm	God's Grace in a Season of Suffering	Brad & Vicki Bigney
<b>2:00-2:20 pm</b>	<b>BREAK</b>	
2:20-3:20 pm	Talking to Kids About Gender Dysphoria	Peter LaRuffa
<b>3:20-3:35 pm</b>	<b>BREAK</b>	
3:35-4:35 pm	Communicating with an Angry or Unmotivated Teen	Rick Horne
<b>4:35 pm</b>	<b>DISMISS</b>	

# When Parenting Teens Gets Messy

## Counseling Adolescents

Peter LaRuffa, Grace Fellowship Church

### I. We Need To Remember And Hold Fast To The Sufficiency of Scripture!

A. This doctrine is **fundamental** to the Christian faith.

1. The sufficiency of Scripture is a demonstration of God's desire to restore the broken relationship between Himself and sinners like us.

**Romans 10:17** – <sup>17</sup> So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through **the word of Christ**.

2. No other writings are **necessary** in order for someone to understand the Gospel and be saved.

B. This doctrine is **foundational** to the practice as biblical counseling.

1. We really believe the Bible is sufficient to **equip** us for a life of faith, service & godliness.

**2 Timothy 3:15–17** – <sup>15</sup> and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is **breathed out** by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be **complete**, equipped for every good work.

2. If the Scriptures are enough to make us “complete” and equip us for “every good work,” nothing else is **necessary**.

**2 Peter 1:3** – <sup>3</sup> His divine power has granted to us **all things that pertain to life and godliness**, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence...

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## II. We must not hide the Word of God from anyone, especially young people!

### A. Psalm 78

1. According to Psa. 78:4, how might we “hide” God from our children?
2. According to Psa. 78:5,6, who does God have in mind when it comes to teaching young people about Him?
3. According to Psa. 78:7-11 what is the intended result of teaching young people about the Lord?
4. Adolescents have a lot in **common** with the Israelites.
  - a) They can be **forgetful** and **ungrateful**. (Psa. 78:11)
  - b) They can be **rebellious**. (Psa. 78:17)
  - c) They can **push boundaries** & **test limits**. (Psa. 78:18)
  - d) They can **speak against** those who love them most. (Psa. 78:19)
5. Read through the rest of Psa. 78 and notice how it parallels many parent-adolescent relationships.

**Psalm 78:39** – <sup>39</sup>He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes and comes not again.

*You're most like God when you notice the shortcomings of another and lean in with compassion instead of throwing up your hands in frustration.*

## III. Tips on Counseling Adolescents

- A. Having the trust of the counselee's **parent/guardian** is of utmost importance.

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1. In all likelihood, the subjective nature of the parent-child relationship hasn't been fruitful thus far, so the objective nature of a counselor-counselee relationship is what's needed.
2. The more objective you can be (counselor, counselee, and the Word of God), the more likely this will be fruitful over time.
3. Parental involvement is best from a **distance**.
  - a) General progress reports are best, with the first one being after 3-4 sessions, then maybe every other week under normal circumstances.

*"It's important that your child can trust me and be as transparent and vulnerable as possible, and that's not going to happen if he/she thinks Mom/Dad are going to get a 'play-by-play' report after every session. I will likely be able to serve you and your child best if you can trust me to tell you what you need to know, when I think you need to know it."*

- B. Gaining the **trust** of an adolescent counselee is of utmost importance.
  - a) Nothing **ruins** a counseling relationship with an adolescent more than a "helicopter parent."
  - b) If the child is under the impression you're just going to report everything to their parents, expect the same amount of "success" as the parents have had thus far.
- C. Establish what **confidentiality** looks like (because it's of utmost importance to adolescents).
  1. Most adolescents aren't as concerned about their parents knowing something as they are about being surprised that their parents know.
  2. Make it a practice to promise your counselees that you won't ever "blindsided" them.

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*“Counseling works best if we can have trust for one another, and I want you to be able to trust me, so here’s what I can promise you. First, I’m not giving your parents a detailed play-by-play report of what we discuss. They’ll get general updates as to how I think it’s going, how they can pray, and if there’s a way I think they can help.*

*“Second, I’m never going to blindside you. You’re never going to go home and find out that I was just on the phone with your parents and be surprised that they know something you told me. Remember, I’m only giving general updates to your parents. If there’s something more specific I think they need to know, I’ll tell you first, and we’ll work that out together first. Does that make sense?”*

D. Be willing to establish involvement and gather data **for a long, long time.**

1. If an adolescent is willing to meet with you, even if reluctantly, remain willing to meet with them for 6–10 sessions.
  - a) Get to know them as much as possible.
  - b) Don’t go too deep too fast. Keep it as light as possible on the front end.
  - c) “Come & See” → “Come & Follow” → “Come & Die

*Chatting on the front end can pave the way for deeper discussion on the back end.*

- d) Ask **easy** questions about school, life, friends, work, siblings, home, boyfriend/girlfriend, sports, hobbies, their week, their weekend.

- (1) “Top 3/Bottom 3”
- (2) “Like & Dislike”
- (3) “Rose, Bud & Thorn”



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2. Good counselors don't rush the counseling process. They keep in step with the Holy Spirit, and go at His pace.

**Galatians 5:25** – <sup>25</sup> If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

- E. Look for opportunities to provide empathy and/or sympathy.

(Greek) empathy = *em* (in) + *pathos* (feeling) *empathia*

*"I know what that's like. It's really hard."*

(Greek) sympathy = *sum* (with) + *pathos* (feeling) *sumpathia*

*"Wow. That sounds really hard."*

- F. Look for opportunities to gently ask probing questions to see if he/she will engage.

**Proverbs 15:23** – <sup>23</sup> A person takes joy in giving an answer; and a timely word—how good that is!

**Proverbs 25:11** – <sup>11</sup> A word spoken at the right time is like gold apples in silver settings.

**Hebrews 4:16** – <sup>16</sup> Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need.

*"When that happens, do you think about what God thinks, or just about the other people involved?"*

*"By the way, what do you believe about God, anyway? I don't want to assume you just believe what your parents believe."*



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*"Interesting. It reminds me of a Bible verse that says..."*

*"You know Heb. 4:15 says Jesus was tempted in the same ways we are. How do you think Jesus dealt with that?"*

- G. Pray for God to show you when it would be **best** to give hope and provide biblical instruction.

*"Interesting. It reminds me of a Bible verse that says..."*

*"Jesus dealt with that. He gets it."*

*"I know it feels that way and seems to be true. Feelings can be very convincing, especially when they're strong...but did you know the Bible says something different?"*

- H. Pray for God to show you when it would be **best** to give hope and provide biblical instruction.

*"Can we try something? Try reading this passage 1X/day before we meet next time. I will, too, and then we'll be ready to talk about it together."*

*"How about you fill out a quick questionnaire for me this week and we can talk about it next week?"*

- "How's it going?"
- "Journal of Upsets"
- "Family of Origin"
- "Likes & Dislike"

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*"I wonder if there's a pattern there. I'll send you a link and you can track it, and then we can see if there's anything in common with the occurrences."*

- "How's it going?"
- "Journal of Upsets"

*"Ever try to 'Count The Wins'? I'll send you a link and you can 'Catch Yourself' doing better than you typically do. You'll probably be pleasantly surprised."*

- "Catch Yourself"

## IV. Misc. Closing Thoughts

- A. Biblical counseling can't be "force-fed." If the counselee really doesn't want to be there, it's probably better to call it off in the first 3 weeks instead of dragging it out longer.

Tell the parent: *"Listen, I really don't think he/she is ready for counseling right now. Instead of trying to force this (which won't work), let's call it off now and leave an open door for the future instead of it going poorly and ending on a sour note."*

If you shame the adolescent, you'll burn a bridge. Don't say *"It's obvious from your lack of participation that you don't want to be here,"* or *"Your parents tell me you're only coming because they're making you,"* or *"If you don't wanna be here, fine. Come back when you do."*

Instead, say something like this: *"I could be wrong, but this doesn't seem like the right fit for you right now. Is that right?"* If they agree, say *"That's what I thought. How about we set this aside for now? In the future, if you're ready to give it a shot, just let me know. I'd love to meet again."*

If they disagree (sometimes they will), say *"Oh, I must have misunderstood. It's not personal, but it just seems that you're not very interested in being here. Are you?"* If they insist they are (again, sometimes they will), then say *"OK good. Let's give it a shot again next week and hopefully talk some more then."*

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- B. Parents may mean well in trying to enforce counseling participation with consequences for incomplete homework, poor attitude about the counseling process, etc., but that rarely works.

Tell the parent: *"I appreciate your willingness to help, but I want to see how much he/she does on his/her own; not just to avoid an ultimatum from you. Thank you, but let me work with him/her over time, and I'll let you know if/when I need your help."*

- C. You may not have a counselee at the beginning, but if you have a young person who is willing to give you time, you may end up with a counselee at the end.
  - 1. Many times, biblical counseling doesn't "work" on adolescents because of the impatience and/or pride of the counselor.
- D. Treat the counselee as the individual he/she truly is. Do your best not to associate them with their family and/or their involvement in church, ministry, etc.

Don't say things like: *"I'm sure you've heard this stuff before because you're a 'Jones.'" or "Surely you believe \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. I know I would if I had your parents."*

- E. Remember – **ageism** works both ways! Don't assume something about someone else simply based on their season of life. There are many adolescents who genuinely love Jesus and really will respond well to biblical counseling. The question is whether or not you're willing to be used by the Lord in reaching them with biblical hope & help.

# *When Parenting Teens Gets Messy*

## Recommended Resources

Tripp, Paul. *Parenting: 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016.

Tripp, Paul. *Age of Opportunity*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001.

Fitzpatrick, Elyse & Jim Newheiser, *When Good Kids Make Bad Choices*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2005.

Priolo, Lou. *Heart of Anger*. Amityville, NY: Calvary Press, 1998.

# *When Parenting Teens Gets Messy*

## FACING THE STORMS OF DESTRUCTION

### PARENTING AN ANGRY YOUNG PERSON

#### PART 1

*Rick Horne, Grace Fellowship Church*

*The Urban Ministry Institute/Oakseed, Int'l Ministries*

## Part 1 (Friday Evening)

### Introduction: Fathers' Day

- A Under attack in a cave (Ps 57)
- B. David's commitment
- C. My hopes for this session

### I. God's joy for you in the "storms of destruction" (Ps 21:6)

- A. Will make you stable
- B. Will enable you to persevere
- C. Will guide you to wise responses
- D. Will empower your actions by prayer
- E. Will open you up for help from Christ's church

### II. A biblical strategy to face the waves of the "storms of destruction"

- A. Use the riptide of your parental identity
- B. Use the riptide of your teen's identity
- C. Use the riptide of respect (accountability)

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## **III. Wisdom to face the waves and allow your teen to sink**

- A. Making the water deep: clarifying privileges and rights
- B. Making the water deeper: connecting privileges and choices
  - 1. The power approach
  - 2. The respectful approach
  - 3. Common teen excuses

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## Desperate Parents Make the Best Parents

*Pastor Brad Bigney, Grace Fellowship Church*

**Author and counselor, Dan Allender**, tells how as a young pastor and parent he had the opportunity to meet with the great theologian, William Hendrickson. By the way, Dr. Hendrickson is the author of my very favorite set of commentaries I own. Dr. Hendrickson was in his 80's when Dan Allender met with him for lunch with a bunch of other young pastors.

**He says at one point all the young pastors around the table started talking about** how hard it was being a father... and the demands they felt as fathers... and when they started talking that way Dr. Hendrickson SMILED and said, "Remember parenting is not difficult; it is impossible." His laugh conveyed both agony and hope. Allender says he answered a few more theological questions for us, but then before our time was over, Dr. Hendrickson turned the conversation back to the subject of parenting. **He looked at us and said**, "Nothing you do will be more important than being fathers; and in nothing will you fail more miserably. Parenting is impossible, so you will need God more than you will need to be a good parent." *How Children Raise Parents*, Dan Allender, p. 111 & 112

- You need **God** more than you need to be a **good** parent! Because without God you can't BE a good parent for long.
- There are two categories of parents - you're either **desperate** or you're **deluded**.
- It's our human and sinful nature to try to boil everything down to just a few **principles**. We want some kind of **system** or check-list that will put us in control and allow us to operate without God.



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- But mark it Down! Biblical principles **divorced** from the God of THOSE PRINCIPLES will not produce the **results** we're looking for. And you can knock yourself out in the flesh... and it won't make up for the absence of God.

**Paul Tripp** says this is a parenting principle that we need to come to grips with. God says, "His grace is made perfect' Where? In our Weakness! (That's what 2 Cor. 12:10 teaches) Paul Tripp says here's a principle: In parenting, your weakness will not keep you from effectiveness if you believe the Gospel. Your delusion of strength will! Because it will keep you from seeking the Lord... keep you from seeking His help... keep you from humbly saying, 'It's not only my child God is working on in this moment... He's also working on me...'" Taken from **Case for Kids** tapes series, tape #3 "What Are Teenagers?"

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## 4 Ways Biblical Desperation Shows Up in a Life

### I. Show Your Counselees that Desperate Parents are Driven to Cry Out to God in Prayer

**Colossians 4:2, 12** "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving... **v. 12** Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

#### A. Get your counselees to be praying for specific traits or characteristics that they want to see developed in their children

That they'd stand alone  
That they'd be found out quickly when they sin  
That they'd make the Bible their authority for life  
That they'd be humble and teachable  
That they'd hunger and thirst for righteousness and holiness  
That they'd go hard after the things of God  
That they'd always tell the truth – even if it costs them

Use Desiring God Ministries booklet *Praying for the Next Generation* (Sally Michael) – it's just full of Scripture prayers.

#### B. Get your counselees to pray about **Specific Sins** And Weaknesses that you see in your children

Pride –being 'wise in their own eyes'  
Stubbornness  
Unteachable spirit  
Deceitfulness / Exaggeration  
Idolatry of living for external beauty vs. cultivating inner beauty  
Laziness – put on diligence  
Living for pleasure

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- C. Get your counselees to pray for '**breakthroughs**' and insights into what's going on in their home, their own heart, and their child's heart.

For more help on this – check out my book, *Gospel Treason – Betraying the Gospel with Hidden Idols*. Also check out the website [www.braddigney.com](http://www.braddigney.com) for a free study guide, as well as sermon video and audio about idolatry.

**James 1:5** “If any of you lacks wisdom let him ask of God who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

**Prov. 2:7** “He stores up sound wisdom for the upright...”

### Example of “Breakthrough Insights from God”

1. Slow down – you can't parent in a hurry / or on the fly
2. Train them! Don't just correct wrong behavior – show them the correct / role play the righteous behavior
3. Use Scripture again! Open the Bible – read a verse
4. Go on a 'Love Crusade' again!
5. Expect to be doing these things – don't act like it's inconvenient or that don't have time
6. You can't control your children or get a hold of their hearts... only God can do that!

- **Jim Elliff** “Comfort for Christian Parents of Unconverted Children” ([www.ccwtoday.org](http://www.ccwtoday.org))

- **Howard Eames** personal testimony / commentary on this article

7. Your joy cannot be tied to how well or poorly your children are doing.

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In his book *Lost in the Middle* Paul Tripp gives the example of how our own idolatry creeps into our parenting when he says, "Joanna thought she had grown in her faith. The problem was that she had forgotten who she was, and it was not long before her identity in Christ was replaced by another identity. Joanna's children became her new identity. They gave her meaning and purpose, and they really did give her hope and joy. The problem was that they were not sent by God to do any of that. Joanna lived vicariously through them, and the more she did, the more she became obsessed with their success. Although Joanna was just as faithful in her personal devotions and public worship, God was no longer at the center of who she was. All it took was Jimmy to mess it all up. With all his inner turmoil, Jimmy didn't make a very good trophy. Being with him often meant unexpected confrontations and public embarrassment. The girls were forced to live in the wings of Jimmy's drama and they didn't turn out to be trophy children either. Now that they were adults, Joanna was lost... She was paralyzed by what had happened to them, not just because she loved them so much, but more importantly because of what their struggle took away from her. In their tumultuous launch into adulthood, the kids not only broke Joanna's heart, but they also robbed her of her identity. She felt like it had all been for naught. When she looked in the mirror, she felt like she didn't know the person she saw there." *Lost in the Middle*, Paul David Tripp, p. 275-276

8. Be careful what you pray for! My wife, Vicki, read where an African Christian made the comment, "You Americans are always praying that God would remove the trials. We pray that God would strengthen our backs to bear the trials for His glory." 10 years ago I wrote it in my prayer journal and started praying "Lord, don't remove the trials but strengthen my back to bear them for your glory."

Nothing lays us quite as low – or strikes as close to my heart – as parenting trials. They seem to hurt the most... and drag on the longest... and bring the most confusion and heartache. But God knows! He's been a parent long before you and I ever started this journey.

**Isa. 1:2** "I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me."

***Parenting is More than a Formula*** – Jim Newheiser

***When Good Kids Make Bad Choices*** – Jim Newheiser

***Come Back, Barbara*** – Jack and Rosemarie Miller

***Prodigals, and Those Who Love Them*** – Ruth Bell Graham

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**James 1:2-4** “Count it all joy, my brethren, when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience, but let patience have its perfect work that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”

**Convicting question:** How much time do you or your counselees spend praying about the struggles with their children compared to talking or complaining about them to other people?

## II. Show Your Counselees that Desperate Parents are Driven to Cling to God’s Word for Grace

As Eugene Peterson says about discipleship, “It’s a long obedience in the same direction.” That’s what parenting has to be.

**2 Timothy 2:1-3** “... be strong in the *grace* that is in Christ Jesus, and the things that you have heard from me... commit these to faithful people who will be able to teach others also. Therefore, you must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ...”

**Proverbs 22:6** “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

That verse is almost always taught as a promise for parents who do right, and at the same time an indictment against parents whose children are not following the Lord. And it’s unfortunate that most of our English translations make it sound like a ‘money-back’ guarantee regarding parenting.

But a stronger and more correct translation and interpretation of this verse would be: “If you bring up a child in his way [i.e. the way he is bent (as a sinner)] when he is old he will not depart from it.”

In other words, this verse is a warning for parents more than it is a promise.

- This interpretation is also consistent with the whole book of Proverbs, which teaches that *generally* speaking, good parents turn out good children and bad parents turn out bad children.
- But it’s also consistent with the message so often found in Proverbs telling children to choose wisdom.

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“In its proper context Proverbs 22:6 is not a promise so much as it is a warning to Christian parents. In the Hebrew text of Proverbs 22:6, the phrase ‘in the way he should go’ is entirely lacking. Rather, the Hebrew says, ‘Train up a child in his way and when he is old he will not depart from it.’... Allow a child to have self-expression, allow him to pick and to choose what he will and will not do, and as that habit is formed in his youth he will not change when he is older... This verse is a stern warning.” Bruce Ray, *Withhold Not Correction*, p. 33

So we look to God and trust God to do what only He can do!

**2 Corinthians 3:4-5** “And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills but the Spirit gives life.”

**Acts 20:32** “And now brethren, I commend you to God and to the Word of His grace which is able to build you up...”

The Bible will build your counselees up as a parent! It will FEED and FILL their hearts for moments they don’t even know are going to happen this week... but God knows.

Dan Allender says, “Our reliance on everything but grace HAS US exhausted, worried, and secretly counting the days until our little cherubs are out of their diapers, or in school, or out of adolescence, or out of the house. The desire to rush through one stage to get to the next is the idiocy of believing that the grass really is greener on the other side. It isn’t, of course. Don’t rush the future; generally parenting only gets harder.” *How Children Raise Parents*, Dan Allender, p. 131

**Colossians 3:16** “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another...”

### III. Show Your Counselees that Desperate Parents are Willing to Confess Their Own Sins Quickly

James 5:16 “Confess your sins to one another”

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And the Lord helps those who – not help themselves... but humble themselves! – who are humble enough to acknowledge that my sin – and your sin is part of the equation – not just my child’s sin but my sin.

“The fact is that none of our children, no matter how spiritually inclined, turns out like we would have imagined or dreamed. They make choices that you and I wouldn’t make. They go through the bumps and bruises of young adulthood, sometimes bloodying their noses in unnecessary ways. They may share your faith, but they don’t share every one of your values. And along the way they can be quite candid about your weaknesses and failures and how they have determined to avoid them...

We weren’t the parent that we wanted to be. Yes, we were very dedicated to do it God’s way, and we were always looking to learn. We sought to make God’s presence obvious to our children, and we talked much about the Gospel. We endeavored to be faithful in correction, instruction, and discipline. But in all of this there was one huge and glaring problem: we did it all as sinners. There were so many times when our sin got in the way.” *Lost in the Middle*, Paul David Tripp, p. 104-105

**Matthew 7:3-5** “And why do you look at the speck in your [son or daughter’s] eye, but do not consider the plank that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your [son or daughter], ‘Let me remove the speck out of your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see more clearly to remove the speck out of your [son or daughter’s] eye.”

As hard as it is, you need to encourage your counselee to be willing to confess their own sins to their son or daughter, even before they repent, before they change.

“Let us challenge you to do something that we’ve tried to do as we’ve faced our family difficulties: strive to win the gospel race! Think to yourself: If I’m the first to confess, the first to repent and humble myself, the first to the cross, I’ll experience renewed grace from Him! I won’t have to worry about trying to defend my own reputation or the ‘moral high ground.’ Instead, I’ll be flooded with God’s mercy. Remembering that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5) should motivate you to resist the temptations to blame, to hide, and to win.” *When Good Kids Make Bad Choices*, Elyse Fitzpatrick and Jim Newheiser



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## **IV. Show Your Counselee that Desperate Parents are Humble Enough to Allow Others to Speak to Them about Parenting**

**Prov. 12:1** “Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, But he who hates correction is stupid.

**Prov. 15:12** “A scoffer does not love one who corrects him, Nor will he go to the wise.

**Prov. 13:18** “Poverty and shame will come to him who disdains correction, But he who regards a rebuke will be honored.

### **Recommended Reading**

*When Good Kids Make Bad Choices*, Elyse Fitzpatrick and Jim Newheiser, Harvest House Pub., 2005

*Prayers for Prodigals – 90 Days of Prayers for Your Child*, James Banks, Discovery House, 2011

*Come Back, Barbara*, C. John Miller and Barbara Miller Juliani, P&R Publishing, 1997

*You Never Stop Being a Parent – Thriving in Relationship with Your Adult Children*, P&R Pub., 2010

*Parenting is More than a Formula*, Jim Newheiser, P&R Pub., 2015

*Dealing with Your Rebellious Teens: Help for Worried Parents*, Barbara Juliani, New Growth Press, 2018

# *When Parenting Teens Gets Messy*

## **Panel Discussion**

**Salem4Youth & Mark Shaw**

**Grace Fellowship Church**

# *When Parenting Teens Gets Messy*

## **FACING THE STORMS OF DESTRUCTION**

### **PARENTING AN ANGRY YOUNG PERSON**

#### **PART 2**

*Rick Horne, Grace Fellowship Church*

#### **Part 2 (Saturday morning)**

Q & A from Part I

#### **III. Wisdom to face the waves and allow your teen to sink (Con't)**

C. Making the water deepest: connecting privileges to respectful attitudes

#### **IV. Develop a plan to communicate to your angry teen**

A. Pray

B. Review motive and identities

C. Summarize key concepts: respect, freedom of choice, rights, privileges

D. Keep it simple

E. Review it in two weeks

# *When Parenting Teens Gets Messy*

## V. From our experience:

- A. Pray and weep!
- B. Be loving and respectful!
- C. Be open to help from others.
- D. Be faithful in other relationships.
- E. Seek forgiveness.
- F. Persevere in Hope.
- G. Be glad with the joy of his presence! (Ps 21:6)

# When Parenting Teens Gets Messy

## Hope and Help for the Hurting Parents

### Part 1&2

*Pastor Brad Bigney, Grace Fellowship Church*

If you counsel long enough there's one Christian urban legend that you'll run into that's causing incredible heartache... and turmoil in so many homes... It's the Christian urban legend that says, 'A Godly Home **Guarantees** Godly **Kids**.'

- Grew up hearing it **preached** that way and **taught** that way in their local church or home-school co-op
- If their older kids begin to stray they don't have a **category** to put that in
- It's more than just **disappointing** and heart-breaking... for some Christian parents it leads to a major **crisis** of faith... **doubting** the Word of God... and the **goodness** of God
- Can also lead to a **fracture** in their marriage as they begin to cast **blame** back and forth between the two of them

A godly home does not **guarantee** godly kids... but a godly home can lay the **foundation** for the **grace** of God and the **Gospel** of Christ that **alone** can produce godly kids.

The grace of God and the Gospel of Christ is better than all the **systems...** and **recipes...** and **formulas** that men and women could ever come up with.

# When Parenting Teens Gets Messy

## I. Help them to Stop Looking for Some Kind of Parenting Guarantee

God gives us responsibilities... and warnings... and grace... and the Gospel... and a Savior... and the church of Jesus Christ around us... but He gives us no parenting guarantees.

- So where did we get this idea of a money-back 'guarantee' that if we raise our kids in a godly home they'll follow hard after God?

**Proverbs 22:6** "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

Proverbs 22:6 is almost always taught as a promise for parents who do right... and at the same time an indictment against parents whose children are not following the Lord. And it's unfortunate that most of our English translations make it sound like a 'money-back' guarantee regarding parenting.

But a stronger and more correct translation and interpretation of this verse would be: "If you bring up a child in his way [i.e. the way he is bent (as a sinner)] when he is old he will not depart from it."

In other words, this verse is a WARNING for parents more than it is a promise.

- This interpretation is also consistent with the whole book of **Proverbs**, which teaches that *generally* speaking, good parents turn out good children and bad parents turn out bad children.
- But it's also consistent with the message so often found in Proverbs telling children to choose wisdom.

# When Parenting Teens Gets Messy

“In its proper context Proverbs 22:6 is not a promise so much as it is a warning to Christian parents. In the Hebrew text of Proverbs 22:6, the phrase ‘in the way he should go’ is entirely lacking. Rather, the Hebrew says, ‘Train up a child in his way and when he is old he will not depart from it.’... Allow a child to have self-expression, allow him to pick and to choose what he will and will not do, and as that habit is formed in his youth he will not change when he is older... This verse is a stern warning.” **Bruce Ray, *Withhold Not Correction*, p. 33**

This ‘Urban Legend’ is especially devastating because it produces...

- Needless **guilt** in the parent who worked **hard** to raise their kids for God
- Foolish **pride** in the parent who is seeing good results
- and a false sense of **hope** for parents to cling to instead of looking to God’s **grace** and the **Gospel**

## A. Watch Out for **Pride**

Don’t be a glory-robber! If your kids are godly... be careful that you don’t take too much of the **credit** – and keep pointing everyone to your **‘system’** instead of your **Savior...** or getting everyone fired up about your particular **‘resources’** instead of your **Redeemer!**

Never lose sight of the fact – that home-school... Christian school... Classical school... and public school kids all need giant **doses** of the **grace** of God... and the **power** of His Spirit... and the **beauty** of Christ... and the **wonder** of the Gospel... or it all just falls on deaf ears and hard hearts.

## B. Watch Out for **Despair** and Self-Inflicted Condemnation

A godly home is a foundational **piece...** it’s a great **start...** and it’s our **responsibility...** but it’s no **guarantee.**



# When Parenting Teens Gets Messy

## C. Recognize that Wandering & Rebellious Children Can Happen to the Best of Families

**Isaiah 1:2-3** "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: 'I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me; the ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib; but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.'"

Sometimes you'll even see rebels and Christ-Followers coming from the same set of parents!

It's the grace factor and the Gospel factor that we don't focus on often enough in the whole parenting process.

## D. Children are Responsible for Their Own Actions and Choices

You can't live their lives for them... and you can't make them follow Christ! You can't take out a heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.

**Ezekiel 18:20-21** "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die."

"Don't play the shame game or the blame game. Let me encourage you not to take on more or less responsibility than is biblically required... For the longest time I had a running argument with myself. If God tells us how to raise our children, and they turn out bad, then isn't that my fault? This is what I call the shame game. Later came the blame game. I'd fall into the ditch on the other side of the road by saying, 'This is God's fault. If there is a God, He's cruel or weak.' I'd go back and forth between beating myself up for not being able to help my miserable and tortured daughter and being angry and frustrated with her uncontrollable behavior. I'd feel sorry for her; then I'd have a big pity party for myself. Doubts and fears overwhelmed me sometimes." "Dear Unbelieving Child, How I Long For Your Soul," *The Afternoon of Life, Finding Purpose and Joy in Midlife*, Elyse Fitzpatrick

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## E. As Parents You Can Have Lots of Influence But You Have Absolutely No Power to Change a Life!

Just look at a snapshot of the kings of Israel and Judah and you'll see how there's no formula or guarantee that says 'If you'll live a godly life and train your kids, they'll follow hard after God... guaranteed.'

In the book of **2 Kings**... you can see...

Jehoshaphat was a godly king – who ruled for 25 yrs.

... **but his son** – Jehoram was a wicked king – who ruled for 8 yrs.

... and his son – Ahaziah ruled 1 yr. – and was also a wicked king

... **but his son** – Joash was a godly man – who ruled for 42 yrs.

... and his son – Amaziah was a godly king – who ruled 29 yrs.

... and his son – Uzziah was a godly king – who ruled for 52 yrs.

... and his son – Jotham was a godly king – who ruled for 16 yrs.

... but his son – Ahaz was a wicked king – who ruled for 16 yrs.

... **but his son** – Hezekiah loved God and went hard after him for 29 yrs.

... **but his son** – Manasseh was one of the most wicked ever – who ruled for 55 yrs...

... and had a wicked son – Amon who ruled for 2 yrs.

... **but his son** was one of the most godly of them all – Josiah – who ruled for 31 yrs.

Some Christians insist on a 'Formula' or 'Guarantee' approach to parenting...

# When Parenting Teens Gets Messy

"The principles of raising a garden work! And the principles of raising children work also. Many of God's people do not believe that. In fact, they live in unbelief... and fear... and doubt... as to how their children will turn out. But I believe in my heart that in the same way that we learn principles... about raising a garden God also puts principles in His Word, and if we'll follow the principles that He gives in His Word we can get the same results. We can get lasting results... If I obey the Bible I'll get results. If I obey garden principles I will get results." Denny Kenaston, sermon "A Godly Heritage" from the sermon series, "The Godly Home, Set 1"

- Sounds pretty good... doesn't it? But what about drought? What if there's no rain? That throws the whole gardening system out of whack – doesn't it?

We are **Gospel**-dependent... **grace**-dependent... and **Christ**-dependent parents! We have to cry out to God to do what **only** He can do... and we don't like that.

"You know, the Lord has to pour out just as much grace to save a child from a believing family as He does to save one from a more worldly environment! We parents need to embrace this humbling (yet liberating) truth: We are not in control of our children's destiny. We are powerless to create faith in our children's hearts. While we can encourage our children to hunger for Wisdom's Feast, we cannot make that choice for them. Only the sovereign Lord can change our children's hearts, and that's because, as dear as they are to us, our children are sinners by nature." *When Good Kids Make Bad Choices*, Elyse Fitzpatrick and Jim Newheiser, P. 28

**2 Chronicles 20:3** "And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord..."

**2 Chronicles 20:12** "O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You."

That's a great parenting prayer when dealing with older adult children. We have no power! And to top it off so many times we really don't know what to say or do anymore... we're so confused and weary... and have gotten so much advice from so many well-meaning people... but God has all power... God has all wisdom... and God has all mercy that is needed to work in that situation.

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Don't scheme... don't plan... don't run around in a frenzy trying to make things happen in the flesh. Don't think you can organize... administrate... and execute a plan that will force your child to change. You can't... and you won't!

## II. Start Living and Speaking the Gospel as Much as Possible

You can live in such a way to make Christ and the Gospel as attractive as possible. Let them see it in your life... and hear it on your lips. Both!

**I Timothy 4:16** "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers."

'Systems' create Pharisees... but the power of the Gospel produces converts... and converts are what we're looking for... isn't it?

"We had placed great confidence in Christian nurture in the home and in Christian private schools. But no one grows into grace through a Christianized environment. No one gets to God by moral self-improvement. You only get to God by being transplanted from your natural soil into the life of Christ by a personal faith in Him. In our nurture of Barbara we had unconsciously forgotten these foundational truths. We were also beginning to learn that we were entirely dependent on God to change Barbara..." **Come Back, Barbara**, C. John Miller & Barbara Miller Julian, pg. 30-31

God's in the business of igniting 'Gospel Bombs' in lives of the hardest... meanest... coldest... most confused people!

**Romans 1:16-17** "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith..."

## III. Never Forget that the Trials of Parenting are All About Our Growth and God's Glory!

# When Parenting Teens Gets Messy

## A. A Parenting Trial Can Help You See Your Own Sin More Clearly

The parenting trial doesn't just get dark because of the choices your child is making... it gets dark because of what you're seeing about your own heart... and it's not fun. We don't want to be brought face to face with our own sin... we want to focus on their sin! But God says, 'Hey! Let Me show you something else.'

**Psalm 38** is a great chapter that expresses the attitude and posture that we need to have in this parenting trial. The focus should not just be on your son or daughter's sin... because they're not the only one sinning... and they're not the only one that needs rescued!

And the Lord helps those who – not help themselves... but humble themselves! – who are humble enough to acknowledge that my sin – and your sin is part of the equation... not just my child's sin... My sin.

"The fact is that none of our children, no matter how spiritually inclined, turns out like we would have imagined or dreamed. They make choices that you and I wouldn't make. They go through the bumps and bruises of young adulthood, sometimes bloodying their noses in unnecessary ways. They may share your faith, but they don't share every one of your values. And along the way they can be quite candid about your weaknesses and failures and how they have determined to avoid them...

We weren't the parent that we wanted to be. Yes, we were very dedicated to do it God's way, and we were always looking to learn. We sought to make God's presence obvious to our children, and we talked much about the Gospel. We endeavored to be faithful in correction, instruction, and discipline. But in all of this there was one huge and glaring problem: we did it all as sinners. There were so many times when our sin got in the way." *Lost in the Middle*, Paul David Tripp, p. 104-105

**Matthew 7:3-5** "And why do you look at the speck in your [son or daughter's] eye, but do not consider the plank that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your [son or daughter], 'Let me remove the speck out of your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see more clearly to remove the speck out of your [son or daughter's] eye."

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"Let us challenge you to do something that we've tried to do as we've faced our family difficulties: strive to win the gospel race! Think to yourself: If I'm the first to confess, the first to repent and humble myself, the first to the cross, I'll experience renewed grace from Him! I won't have to worry about trying to defend my own reputation or the 'moral high ground.' Instead, I'll be flooded with God's mercy. Remembering that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5) should motivate you to resist the temptations to blame, to hide, and to win."  
*When Good Kids Make Bad Choices*, Elyse Fitzpatrick and Jim Newheiser, p. 56

The goal is not to win this battle between you and your child! The goal is to glorify God in this trial! *2 Cor. 5:9, 1 Cor. 10:31*

## B. A Parenting Trial Can Allow You to Experience God's Grace Like Never Before

So many times our counselees are going from human teacher to human teacher looking for parenting formulas... God gives us the furnace of His grace... the forgiveness of His cross... and the favor of being in right relationship with the God of the universe – through His Son, Jesus Christ! That's where the real comfort is.

"The problem is that we are seeking the grace of release, when God knows that we need the grace of refinement. During this 'now' period of preparation, God's grace will come to us again and again in uncomfortable forms. This is where we tend to have an agenda conflict with our Lord. We don't tend to be very excited about being around people who don't love and affirm us. We get excited about children who grow up and do what is right. We get excited about making plans that actually come true. We get excited about physical health. We get excited about investments that have a good return. We get excited about having a safe, successful, stress-free, and predictable life. The problem with all of these things is not that they are wrong to desire. The problem is that we have settled for far too little. And we are surprised, shocked, and disappointed when God shakes them in order to refine us. You see, God has planned more and better things for us than we would want for ourselves." *Lost in the Middle*, Paul David Tripp, p. 198-199

**Psalm 66:10-12** "For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver. You brought us into the net; You laid affliction on our backs. You have caused men to ride over our

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heads; we went through the fire and through the water; but You brought us out to rich fulfillment."

Help your counselee to trust God and believe that He can use this parenting trial for rich fulfillment in their life.

**Psalm 119:71, 75** "It is good for me that I have been afflicted that I may learn your statutes... and that in faithfulness You have afflicted me..."

## C. A Parenting Trial Can Teach You to Keep Your Focus on God instead of Your Feelings

"Because what you're experiencing is so painful you may be tempted to focus on your feelings, and yet those feelings themselves will obscure the very remedy that will ease your pain. Your pain may tell you to focus inward, and that's what you don't want to do... You WANT to focus on loving God and others..."

It's not uncommon for us parents to be filled with despair when our kids rebel. We feel devastated that our children are rejecting us and our values. Grief over a child who is lost to us is similar to the grief we would feel if a child had actually died. But grief from a rebellious child goes on and on and never seems to find a place of closure. It's not like we can go visit a grave and put flowers on it. Instead, this feels like an ongoing 'death' and our grieving won't go away until our child has a change of heart. Because our hearts are filled with such woe, we can be tempted to crawl into a protective coffin of our own and withdraw from friends, other family members, and even God, pulling the heavy lid down firmly over us." P. 36-37, *When Good Kids Make Bad Choices*

**Jeremiah 17:6** "He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness in an uninhabited salt land."

That describes your counselee exactly... if their focus is on their child... instead of their God... then they're going to feel like they're in the desert... parched places... wilderness... uninhabited salt lands.

**Jeremiah 17:5** "Thus says the LORD: Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the LORD."

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Ask your counselee...

- Who are you really trusting? Are you really trusting God with your child?
- And is your happiness tied to how well your son or daughter is doing in life? Huh?
- And are you looking to your son or daughter to bring you joy and peace?

"It's easy for him to dash your hopes and send you into a downward spiral of doubt and tears, isn't it? On the other hand, if it seems to you that she's doing better, then life may seem lovely again and you may feel more like a well-watered garden. The built-in problem with putting our trust in people, especially in our children, is that they'll let us down. People were never meant to be our primary source of joy. They are a source of happiness to be sure, but they aren't to be *the* mediators of our gladness. Jesus Christ is to be our source – not our spouse or our children or anyone else." P. 38, *When Good Kids Make Bad Choices*

**Jeremiah 17:7-8** "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit."

Ask your counselee to look at the difference between v. 6 and v. 8!

**Jeremiah 17:6** "He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness in an uninhabited salt land."

**Jeremiah 17:8** "He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit."

"Looking back on my life, I realized until April 2001, I was living in a rainforest. My wife and sons were a continual blessing and encouragement to me. When my time of drought came, my trust in God was tested, and initially I wilted into depression. I had to learn how to have joy in the Lord even when what was most important in this life was falling apart all around me. During this time, I've discovered that a drought can be a good thing. It forces a healthy tree to send its roots deeper. I learned that when my children weren't giving me the watering I desired, I had to turn to God and trust Him more deeply than I ever had in my life." P. 39, *When Good Kids Make Bad Choices*



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Parenting Prayer:

“Father, I know that I’ve prayed about this many times before, but now I’m willing to give this situation fully over to You. Forgive me for my worry and for thinking that by my continued thought I would be able to change the course of my child’s life. Forgive me for failing to trust in You and Your goodness and for thinking that my plan was better than Yours. I entrust my child to You now, and although I would pray that this cup of suffering would pass from me, I’m now willing to say with my Savior, ‘Not my will, but Yours be done.’ I submit myself to Your plan, even though I don’t understand it, because I know You. You’re a good Father. I also pray that you would help me get my eyes off of myself and my troubles and onto serving others and building Your kingdom. I trust You for the grace to make it through whatever may come... Thank You for your faithfulness. Amen.” p. 43-44, *When Good Kids Make Bad Choices*, Jim Newheiser and Elyse Fitzpatrick

## D. A Parenting Trial Can Expose Our Pride and Can Put the Big ‘Whammy’ on Judging!

Your counselee probably never thought they were prideful about parenting... until their own parenting dream was blowing up in their face... and when it does it’s not just your parenting dream that’s in pieces all around your feet... it’s also your own ugly pride that suddenly gets exposed and laid bare.

**1 Peter 5:5-6** “... and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time...”

**2 Corinthians 10:12** warns us, “For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”

## E. A Parenting Trial Exposes the Shallowness of Our Love ~ and Gives Us the Opportunity to Love Another Sinner Like God Loves Us!

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**Philippians 1:9-11** really sets the bar where it's supposed to be for us Christians in this whole area of love... Paul says "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."

"In my numbness I wondered what I should be learning from God. I knew that I could not reject Barbara, and the temptation to do so faded pretty quickly. But what was I supposed to do now? On one level, there wasn't much I could do. I doubted if a phone call would be welcome. But one idea did occur to me, an idea that forced me into some healthy self-examination. It was simply this: Did I love Barbara as she really was - or did I only love my idea of Barbara? I knew from my own counseling that family members often don't love each other for who they really are. They love the ideal they have created of the other person. Love from God, I knew, is tougher and clearer-eyed. It loves people as they really are. God's love can be honest about people while holding on to them until that love changes them." **Come Back, Barbara**, C. John Miller & Barbara Miller Julian, pg. 38-39

The Millers go on to say...

"The pain of watching older children move in wrong directions, knowing that no word of rebuke or instruction will reach them, can be overwhelming. The work of God's grace in a parent's heart is most fully revealed when, after admitting their helplessness to bring about the change they deeply desire in their children, they persist in love. There's more to love than we think. The implications of our Lord dying for us 'while we were yet sinners' are staggering. Perhaps the great need of the church today is to face how badly we love and then to enter more fully into the costly grace of our forgiving Lord." **Come Back, Barbara**, C. John Miller & Barbara Miller Julian, pg. 11

**Romans 5:8** "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet *or still* sinners, Christ died for us."

**F. A Parenting Trial of this Magnitude Can Break the Grip of Idolatrous Control that Maybe We've Been Blind to for so Long**

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“Only the Holy Spirit can give the gift of true faith to your children, whether young or grown-up. How often my husband used to pray, ‘Lord, forgive me for trying to play the role of the Holy Spirit in my child's heart.’ Being a good parent doesn't instill true faith in Christ in the hearts of our sons and daughters. Such a simple truth is so difficult to learn. Remember: *God has no grandchildren.*”

Our job is to pray hard and trust God for the results. I've found that praying in faith is much harder than running around ‘doing’ for our children. We mothers are especially prone to fixing our children's problems, aren't we? From applying bandages to bloody knees to making sure they haven't forgotten their schoolwork, we believe that if they're in a crisis, we are required to immediately come to the rescue. For some of us, our prayer needs to be, ‘Lord, let me trust you enough to take my hands off, and let him learn to do this without me.’ We aren't doing our children any favors if we do for them what they can do for themselves. In fact, we're only creating dependency on ourselves. Our job is to point them to Christ, while helping in age-appropriate ways. Just as a plant can be overwatered, so our offspring can be over-mothered.

As a biblical counselor, I have seen many mothers of adult children who seem driven to make sure their dear child is fed, warm, happy, clean, and socially acceptable. They seem to be unable to let go. Their whole identity is wrapped up in their children; they become the mothers' purpose for living. These mothers need to be needed, and sometimes they make an idol of their child's love or success. The world calls this enabling behavior or codependency; but I think a better word would be co-idolatry.”  
“Dear Unbelieving Child, How I Long For Your Soul,” *The Afternoon of Life, Finding Purpose and Joy in Midlife*, Elyse Fitzpatrick

There might be some co-idolatry going on between your counselee and their son or daughter. If so... they need to repent.

### **G. A Parenting Trial Forces Us to Place Our Joy Where it Should've Been All Along**

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"We can rest contentedly in our sins and in our stupidities... but pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world... I am progressing along the path of life in my ordinary contentedly fallen and godless condition, absorbed in a merry meeting with my friends for the morrow or a bit of work that tickles my vanity today, a [vacation], or a new book, when suddenly a stab of abdominal pain that threatens serious disease, or a headline in the newspapers that threatens us all with destruction, sends this whole pack of cards tumbling down. At first I am overwhelmed, and all my little happinesses look like broken toys. Then, slowly and reluctantly, bit by bit, I try to bring myself into the frame of mind that I should be in at all times. I remind myself that all these toys [we could insert 'children'] were never intended to possess my heart, that my true good is in another world, and my only real treasure is Christ. And perhaps, by God's grace, I succeed, and for a day or two become a creature consciously dependent on God and drawing its strength from the right sources. But the moment the threat is withdrawn, my whole nature laps back to the toys... Thus the terrible necessity of tribulation is only too clear." *The Problem of Pain*, ch. 6 – quoted in *Readings for Meditation and Reflection*, edited by Walter Hooper, p. 71-72

Don't **build** your world around your children... don't **worship** your children... and don't try to **control** your older children!

**Habakkuk 3:17-18** "Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls – Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

## H. A Parenting Trial Can Drive You to Desperate Fervent Prayer Like Never Before

**Mark 9:28-29** "... His disciples asked him privately, 'Why could we not cast it out?' So He said to them, 'This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.'"

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Take your counselee to 2 Timothy 2:24 – that’s another great parenting passage that can give you a strategic way to pray... as well as some excellent guidelines as to how you should conduct yourself with your prodigal son or daughter!

**2 Timothy 2:24-26** “And a servant (*a parent of a prodigal son or daughter*) of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”

“All my talking about prayer faced a severe test several years ago when Carol and I went through the darkest two-and-a-half-year tunnel we could imagine. Our oldest daughter, Chrissy, had been a model child growing up. But around age sixteen she started to stray... Chrissy not only drew away from us, but also away from God. In time, she even left our home. There were many nights when we had no idea where she was.

As the situation grew more serious, I tried everything. I begged, I pleaded, I scolded, I argued, I tried to control her with money. Looking back, I recognize the foolishness of my actions. Nothing worked; she just hardened more and more. Her boyfriend was everything we did not want for our child.

Were we calling on the Lord through all of this? In a sense we were. But I couldn’t help jumping in to take action on my own, too. I was still, to some degree, the point guard wanting to grab the basketball, push it down the floor, make something happen, press through any hole in the defense I could find. But the more I pressed, the worse Chrissy got.” *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*, Jim Cymbala, p. 59-62

# *When Parenting Teens Gets Messy*

## **Recommended Reading**

*When Good Kids Make Bad Choices*, Elyse Fitzpatrick and Jim Newheiser, Harvest House Pub., 2005

*Prayers for Prodigals – 90 Days of Prayers for Your Child*, James Banks, Discovery House, 2011

*Come Back, Barbara*, C. John Miller and Barbara Miller Juliani, P&R Publishing, 1997

*You Never Stop Being a Parent – Thriving in Relationship with Your Adult Children*, P&R Pub., 2010

*Parenting is More than a Formula*, Jim Newheiser, P&R Pub., 2015

*Dealing with Your Rebellious Teens: Help for Worried Parents*, Barbara Juliani, New Growth Press, 2018

# *When Parenting Teens Gets Messy*

## **Finding God's Grace in Seasons of Suffering**

Vicki and Brad Bigney, Grace Fellowship Church

### **1. You'll Find Out How Much You Need God's Word**

"It is not that we will learn from adversity something different than what we can learn from the Scriptures. Rather, adversity enhances the teaching of God's Word and makes it more profitable to us. In some instances, it clarifies our understanding or causes us to see truths we had passed over before." Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God*, p. 178

### **2. You'll Wrestle with Who God Is**

Is God good?

Does God love me?

Is God with me?

### **3. Your False Refuges Will Be Stripped Away**

Suffering helps me to see what's going on in my heart as the heat pushes to the surface the idolatry of trusting or hoping in something other than God! And, often, I don't know that I've done this until it's taken or shaken.

# When Parenting Teens Gets Messy

"If God told me some time ago that He was about to make me as happy as I could be in this world, and then had told me that He should begin by crippling me in all my limbs, and removing me from all my usual sources of enjoyment, I should have thought it a very strange mode of accomplishing His purpose. And yet, how is His wisdom manifest even in this! For if you should see a man shut up in a closed room, idolizing a set of lamps and rejoicing in their light, and you wished to make him truly happy, you would begin by blowing out all his lamps; and then throw open the shutters to let in the light of heaven." Quoted in John Piper, *A Godward Life*, p. 288-289

## 4. You'll Be Forced to Relinquish Control

Suffering and trials, more than anything else, kick the props out from under my self-sufficiency so that I am driven to cry out to God in prayer as if my life depends on it, because it does!

## 5. You'll Need to Believe that God is Working on a Bigger 'Story'

"You Americans always pray for God to remove the trial; we pray for God to strengthen our backs to bear it, for His glory."

Reading books can stir me and inform me but suffering and trials are what God uses to really transform me and make me more like His Son.

I'm a much better husband / pastor/shepherd/ and leader when I lead with a limp or start from a posture of weakness rather than strength.



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## **6. Your Marriage Will Be Tested and Stretched for God's Glory**

Suffering will expose and assess your marriage in ways that surveys and personality tests just can't do. A season of suffering will expose any weakness or hair-line fracture in your relationship that, apart from God's grace, can become a 'Grand Canyon' of separation between you and your spouse.

## **7. You Will Be Tempted to Pull Away and Isolate**

When we're overwhelmed with sorrow we can be tempted to crawl into a protective coffin of our own little world, pulling away from everyone, and shrinking our world down to the size of our trial.

# When Parenting Teens Gets Messy

## Talking To Kids About Gender Dysphoria

*Pastor Peter LaRuffa, Grace Fellowship Church*

### I. Why Should You Talk To Your Kids About Gender Dysphoria?

A. Parents bear the **primary responsibility** to raise their children according to God's Word.

1. **Deuteronomy 6:6,7** - <sup>6</sup> And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. <sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your children...
2. **Proverbs 1:8** - <sup>8</sup> Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching...
3. **Psalms 127:4** - <sup>4</sup> Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth.

B. Parents should endeavor to provide **age-appropriate answers** to their children's questions when they're asked.

1. "I'll tell you when you're older," just means "Go find out elsewhere."
  - a) When they do, it probably won't be from a biblical perspective.
2. You want your children to think "I'll ask Mom," or "I'll ask Dad."

C. Parents have **"first dibs"** on their children's worldview.

1. Proverbs 22:6 - <sup>6</sup> **Train up a child in the way he should go**; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

D. Parents should take advantage of the **window of opportunity** to teach God's truth about gender and identity while we have it.

1. **Ecclesiastes 3:1** - <sup>1</sup> **For everything there is a season**, and a time for every matter under heaven...

# When Parenting Teens Gets Messy

## II. Truth To Remember

A. This issue is **not new**. (It's just new to you.)

1. **Ecclesiastes 1:9** – <sup>9</sup>What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.
2. **1 Corinthians 10:13** – <sup>13</sup>No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man.
3. **Deuteronomy 22:5** – <sup>5</sup>“A woman shall not wear a man’s garment, nor shall a man put on a woman’s cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God.

B. You have more in common with the gender dysphoric than you think you do.

1. dysphoria: (noun) a state of feeling very unhappy, uneasy or dissatisfied (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*)
2. **Ecclesiastes 1:8** – <sup>8</sup>All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.
3. **Proverbs 27:20** – <sup>20</sup>Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, and never satisfied are the eyes of man.

C. We all struggle with **identity**.

1. The New Testament is replete with reminders of who we really are because we're prone to wander from the truth of who we really are. (2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:6; Rom. 5:10; Rom. 8:15,16; Gal. 3:29; John 15:15; Mt. 10:35–37; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 6:14–7:1; Col. 3:2; Rom. 6:13; Eph. 6:12)

## III. Pitfalls to Avoid

- A. Don't miss the opportunity to talk to kids about Jesus & people by telling them about “issues” & “culture.”

# When Parenting Teens Gets Messy

**Ephesians 6:12** – <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

- B. Don't let your kids assume someone struggling with gender and sexuality is making a "defiant choice." In nearly every case, people are struggling with responding to **feelings they never chose, always had and can't explain.**
  
- C. Don't oversimplify issues you either haven't experienced or know very little about.
  - 1. Don't say "Well, it's their choice."
  - 2. Don't say "It's probably just a phase."
  - 3. Don't say "It's probably because they were abused."
  - 4. Don't say "It's probably because their parents were angry/absent/abusive/etc."
  - 5. Don't say "It's because of too much time spent in the world, on social media, etc."
    - a) Prov. 18:13 – <sup>13</sup> If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.
    - b) Prov. 18:15 – <sup>15</sup> An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.
    - c) The more you try to explain away someone's pain, the more your kids will think that's how you'll deal with their pain. If they think they'll not be heard or understood by you, they'll stop coming to you.
  
- D. Don't let your kids think gender dysphoria is a fringe or extreme sin that's different from any other counseling issue.
  - 1. This is sin, but **it's just sin.** We have hope and help for sins and sinners!

# When Parenting Teens Gets Messy

## IV. Prepare Your Heart

A. **Relax.** God has not called parents to be an expert on every issue, including this one.

### B. Pray for CONFIDENCE.

1. **Be confident in the Spirit** and His work in and through you. You have the mind of Christ! (1 Cor. 2)

- a) We don't need to speak with "lofty speech or wisdom." (1 Cor. 2:1)
- b) If you know Christ and Him crucified, you're off to a great start! (1 Cor. 2:2)
- c) Your weaknesses and inadequacies pave the way for God to show His strength, might & glory. (1 Cor. 2:3-5; 2 Cor. 12:7-10)
- d) Real, genuine wisdom is not discoverable by humans. (1 Cor. 2:6-9)
- e) True wisdom is revealed to us by God. (1 Cor. 2:10-13)
- f) God gives us His wisdom by illuminating the Scriptures to us. (1 Cor. 2:14-16)

2. **Be confident in the Word of God** to help you and your children understand this and all the issues of life.

**2 Timothy 3:16,17** - <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

C. Pray for CLARITY. in communicating God's Word about this and all things.

- a) **Psalm 19:7** - <sup>7</sup> The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple...
- b) **Psalm 119:130** - <sup>130</sup> The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.

# When Parenting Teens Gets Messy

D. Pray for **COMPASSION** towards people who are just like you and me.

**Romans 3:21-26** – <sup>21</sup>But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— <sup>22</sup>the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: <sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup>and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup>whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. <sup>26</sup>It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

## V. Have A Plan (and plan in pencil)

1. Don’t go for “One And Done.” The goal for this conversation should be to set a foundation for a follow-up conversation(s).
2. Follow the “**Key Elements of Counseling**” in a conversation with your kids.
3. [GATHER DATA] Ask **non-suspicious, non-alarmist questions** to better understand the situation and how they feel.
  - a. *Hmm...where did you hear that?*
  - b. *Hmm...where did you learn that word?*
  - c. *I see. That’s interesting. Sometimes when I’m confused about something, I think about it a lot. Does that happen to you? Do you think about these things a lot?*
4. [DISCERN THE PROBLEM BIBLICALLY / ESTABLISH INVOLVEMENT / GIVE HOPE] Let’s talk about this stuff. It’ll be good to talk together, and I bet we can find some answers from God’s Word. Even though some people are confused about this, we’re really blessed because God has been clear in His Word.

## *When Parenting Teens Gets Messy*

- a. God created us in His image as men and women. (Gen. 1:26,27)
- b. God created us with a specific gender for specific purposes. (Gen. 1:28; Gen. 2:15-18)

*Ask "Why do you think God made men & women?"*

5. It's not good, but it's pretty normal for people to struggle with identity in different ways. Many times, people wish they were different than the way God made them. *(Share examples of when you were unhappy with how God made you or a circumstance you found yourself in. Ask them to recall a time when they were similarly unhappy, and help them recall a time if they can't.)*
6. Since our gender identity is determined by God, people's decisions to express themselves as a different gender never really changes how God made them.

*Ask "Do you think a boy can really turn into a girl just by dressing/acting differently or doing something to their body?"*

7. Since we can't change how God made us, when people try to do things to look or feel differently, it doesn't work. Being a woman or a man isn't just about how we feel, look, or act, so we can't change our gender by changing how we feel, look, or act.
8. When people try to change something on the inside by changing something on the outside, it just adds to their confusion and unhappiness. That's really sad.
9. [PROVIDE BIBLICAL INSTRUCTION] We should never laugh at people who are confused and sad like this. That just hurts them and makes them sadder.

*Ask "When have you been laughed at by someone else? How did it make you feel?"*

10. Instead, we should pray for God to help them understand the truth about how He made them, and how God never makes mistakes.

## *When Parenting Teens Gets Messy*

11. Even though Jesus didn't agree with the sinful things people did, He was a friend of sinners (Luke 7:31-34). People made fun of Him for that. They wanted Him to ignore sinners, make fun of them, and not be around them...but that's not what Jesus did.

"[Jesus] would listen to us, and he would love us... There is no hurting person he would mock, or shun, or insult, or sneer at. He is so determined to pursue what is best for all of us that he died—excluded, mocked and rejected—to secure it."

Andrew T. Walker, *God and The Transgender Debate* (The Good Book Company: 2017), 14-15.

*Ask "Have you ever seen people making fun of someone who was sad or hurting? How did it make them feel? How did it make you feel when you saw that?"*

12. By being a "friend of sinners," Jesus showed us that God's kindness is meant to lead people to repentance (Rom. 2:4).
13. [ASSIGN HOMEWORK] Let's pray for people who are unhappy with the way God made them. If God gives them a love for Jesus and His Word, they'll learn to love who God made them to be, and look to Him and His Word for help when they need it. And, He just might do that through you showing kindness and love for them just like Jesus did.
14. I love talking about these things with you! Let's always talk to each other about things like this. Even if we have to do it again and again, it's good for us to do this together.



# When Parenting Teens Gets Messy

## Suggested Resources:

Allison, Gregg. *Embodied: Living as Whole People in a Fractured World*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 2021)

Hambrick, Brad. *Do Ask, Do Tell, Let's Talk: Why and How Christians Should Have Gay Friends*. (Minneapolis, MN: Cruciform Press, 2016)

Pearcey, Nancy. *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 2018).

Powlison, David. *Making All Things New: Restoring Joy to the Sexually Broken*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017)

Roberts, Vaughn. *Transgender*. (Epsom, UK: The Good Book Company, 2016)

Sprinkle, Preston. *Living In A Gray World: A Christian Teen's Guide to Understanding Homosexuality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015)

Sprinkle, Preston. *People to Be Loved: Why Homosexuality Is Not Just an Issue*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015)

Walker, Andrew T. *God and the Transgender Debate*. (Epsom, UK: The Good Book Company, 2017)

Yarnhouse, Mark. *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015)

# *When Parenting Teens Gets Messy*

## **Helps For Parents & Others Who Want To Communicate With An Angry, Unmotivated Young Person**

**Rick Horne, Grace Fellowship Church  
The Urban Ministry Institute/Oakseed, Int'l Ministries**

### **•“It’s all in the presentation!”**

#### **Proverbs 15:2**

The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly.

#### **Proverbs 16:23**

The heart of the wise makes his speech judicious and adds persuasiveness to his lips.

#### **Proverbs 25:11**

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.

#### **Proverbs 25:20**

Whoever sings songs to a heavy heart is like one who takes off a garment on a cold day, and like vinegar on soda.

### **•Katie—an angry teen!**

#### **•Common responses to Katie**

And Katie’s likely response to this counsel?

# When Parenting Teens Gets Messy

## L C L P

### Listen Big

- Listen actively—reflectively!

(20:5; 18:2, 13; Jas. 2:19)

- Listening doesn't mean agreeing

- Listen to what the teen does NOT want!

- Listen for the "paradox" (she's still making good choices—somewhere for some good reasons—affirm them!)

- Listen till you "join"

### Clarify Narrow

- Clarify "wise wants" (Common Grace Products—cp

*Proverbs*)

Group Task: Identify underlying "wise wants" in

Proverbs 10

- Clarify who the teen can control

- Clarify freedom to NOT change anything

- Clarify what you are NOT trying to do

- Clarify consequences that follow choices—692 PTCs/NTCs (Prov. 9:12)

### •FOR FURTHER READING

• *Shepherding A Child's Heart*, Tedd Tripp, Shepherd Press, 1997

• *Age of Opportunity*, Paul Tripp, Presbyterian & Reformed, 1999.

• *Toughlove*, Phyllis and David York, Bantam, 1983

• *Withhold Not Correction*, Bruce A. Ray, Baker Book House, 1978

• *Get Outta My Face, How to Reach, Angry, Unmotivated, Disinterested Teens with Biblical Counsel.*, Rick Horne, Shepherd Press, January, 2009.

• *Get Offa My Case, Godly Parenting for Angry, Defiant Teens*, Rick Horne, Shepherd Press, December, 2011.

# *When Parenting Teens Gets Messy*

## **Look Wide for Exceptions**

- Exceptions: Common Grace products (Rev. 2:5; Proverbs: “You haven’t always been angry, lazy, bored, disrespectful, neglectful, disorganized...when you’ve been in a situation like this!” etc.)
- When the current problem was not a problem
- Look in school experiences
- Look in home relationships and experiences
- Keep asserting “you don’t have to change!”

## **Plan small—w/specificity**

The plan must be the teen’s—not your plan!

- Plan a small change
- Plan with some way to measure change—formal or informal
- Plan to follow-up— “What has worked for you this week?”

**Change is a heart matter! So...Pray and plan for access to the heart!**

# *When Parenting Teens Gets Messy*



