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Lose the Guilt, Find the Grace

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Lose the Guilt, Find the Grace

Abstract

"Parenting is tough, but God's grace is stronger. God's grace and forgiveness is there for us when lose patience, lose our temper, or just plain lose our minds."

Posting about parenting struggles from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/lose-the-guilt-find-the-grace/>

Keywords

In All Things, guilt, grace, parenting, perseverance

Disciplines

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Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service](#) at Dordt College.

Lose the Guilt, Find the Grace

 [all in allthings.org/lose-the-guilt-find-the-grace/](https://allthings.org/lose-the-guilt-find-the-grace/)

Erin Olson

September 8,
2016

“Mom, we never see you anymore!”

“Why do you always have to go places for work?”

“I know you love Colby more than you love me!”

My eight-year-old son is the king of the guilt trip and his brother and sister aren't too bad at it either. Somehow, he knows just the right thing to say to make me feel like the worst mom on the planet. Don't get me wrong, he can also be a very sweet boy when he wants to be, but he definitely knows how to come up with some zingers that hit me straight in the heart.

For the past three years, I have been a doctoral student taking two classes a semester, while also serving as a full-time college professor, raising three young children, and managing a fairly significant commute to and from work. Did I mention I have a husband? Oh yeah, he's been there too through the craziness of the last few years. Thankfully, there's light at the end of the tunnel—I'm in dissertation phase and hopefully will have those three important letters after my name soon enough.

To say I've experience a little bit of “mommy guilt” over the past three years would be an understatement. Trying to balance the expectations of PhD coursework with parenting and work has at times caused me to question my sanity—and other people do it too. I've heard many times how I'm “crazy” for taking on so much or how I must be “superwoman” to manage everything. I'm neither crazy nor superwoman (though maybe I've felt like both from time to time over the course of this journey). My kids and husband have definitely had to live with less of me and for the most part we've adjusted fairly well, but I'd say we're all looking forward to a more “normal” pace of life once I finish my degree.

There are moments, however, when I'm tempted to be overcome with guilt over what I've “put my kids through” by choosing to pursue this degree while they're young. I'm sometimes plagued with questions about whether I've been present enough during this important stage of their lives. I think all parents, maybe moms especially, feel this tug of guilt from time to time—some of us more than others. The world is good at telling us how we “should be” as parents and any internet search of “good parenting” will give you enough reading material for the next ten years and by the time you've finished reading, your head will be spinning trying to make sense of what's “good” and “bad” when it comes to your kids. Should you breast or bottle feed? How much screen time should your kids have and when should that start? Should you let your kids eat processed foods and sugar? What if my kid can't read when he finishes kindergarten? What if my six-year-old still sleeps with his blanket? And if the internet doesn't provide enough helpful advice on parenting, you can easily find a friend or family member or co-worker who is likely doing things differently than you are and you might start to wonder—am I doing any part of this parenting gig correctly?

When I start to feel myself being sucked in the downward spiral of “mommy guilt”, I think back to my own childhood. After going through a divorce from my dad, my mom went back to school to get her RN degree when I was around ten—the age my daughter is now. I don't look back on my childhood and feel resentment about my mom's time away from us while she was at school. Honestly, I don't remember feeling upset with her at all. What do I remember? I remember feeling proud on the day she graduated and had her three kids standing beside her. She showed me that if you persevere, you can accomplish almost anything you put your mind to. I'm sure she had moments of immense guilt and times when she questioned if she was making the right decisions for herself and for our family. She also had a God who promised to be with her and hold her up on the days when she felt like she could do nothing right.

To all of you moms and dads out there—I hope you’ve realized by now that none of us have this parenting thing figured out and just when you think you do, you’ll be thrown a curve ball that sends you spinning and questioning if you really knew anything in the first place. Parenting is tough, but God’s grace is stronger. God’s grace and forgiveness is there for us when lose patience, lose our temper, or just plain lose our minds. Just keep putting one foot in front of the other and lean on “Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us” (Ephesians 3:20). May God’s grace abound in our homes, marriages and relationships and may we extend ourselves and other that same grace as we travel this journey of parenting and life.