Voices: God’s grace in parenting

March 7, 2018
Nothing shows your true heart like parenting.

With adults at work, at church, even around the family table, we can all put on a show and look more holy than we truly are, but, in our interactions with our kids, there is no hiding.

I used to believe I was a patient man. Then, we had children.

We have a four-year-old and a newborn. It is embarrassing to think about how impatient I can be with my children. My tongue is quick with a sharp word and an angry tone. My selfishness is always on the front burner prepared to bubble over.

Every interruption, and there are many, seems to me to be an offensive encroachment on my precious time and therefore requires a strong rebuke. I hate this selfishness.

Needless to say, I spend a ton of time repenting and asking for forgiveness.

We are not alone in parenting

I write this in order to let some of you know you are not alone.

Parenting is hard. I am not as experienced as most of you are in raising children. I am not an expert, and I would never claim to be good at this parenting thing, but it helps to know we are all in the same boat. It helps to know we are not alone in our struggle to be patient and show the love of God to our children.

We know they are a blessing. We know they are a gift of God's grace. And we find out pretty quickly they are instruments God uses to sanctify us.

You don't have to beat yourself up over all of your perceived failures. God loves you. God loves your children. God has given them to you for a purpose.

He chose you to be the ones to raise them up in the Lord, to show them his love and grace and to impress his commands on their hearts (Deuteronomy 6:6–7).

You will mess up. You will not always be patient or kind. You will have to ask forgiveness from God, from your spouse and from your kids. It is OK.

Let the struggle of parenting lead you back to Jesus over and over again.

In his unending patience, we find forgiveness. In his steadfast love, we find refuge. We are meant to reflect this glory and grace to our kids. We are the first glimpse they will have of Jesus and the truth of the gospel.

We won't be perfect, but we can be faithful to our calling as parents to love our kids as our heavenly Father loves us.

God's grace in parenting

Amazingly, even in my failures, God continues to show his grace. I am amazed over and over again at what my small children reveal to me about God.

Through trying to be faithful as a parent, I have found God's grace.

From the quickness with which my four-year-old forgives me, I have been reminded that, at the cross, my sin was forgiven forever.

In the simple faith of my four-year-old, I have been taught what it means to

live with childlike faith.

In the prayers of my four-year-old, I have been taught what it means to trust God with all of my life and to pour out the desires of my heart to him.

In trying to explain to my four-year-old where her grandmother (my mother) is and why she isn't here, I have been reminded of the hope we have in the resurrection life to come.

In the way my newborn depends on us for everything and in how he trusts us to provide, I have seen my own need and the provision and faithfulness of God in every area of my life.

In the love I feel for my four-year-old and newborn, I am reminded of the patient love of my heavenly Father for me. It is never-ending. It is steadfast. It seeks my good, even when I turn away and disobey.

A reminder of God's love and grace

I write all of this as a reminder for myself. God is working in me and through me. God loves me, and God has given me these children as a gift of his grace.

I mess up. I am impatient. I am selfish. God is gracious and kind.

Maybe you need this reminder too.

You will never be a perfect parent, but you can be faithful.

Love your children. Show them God's grace and forgiveness. Trust them to him.

Rest in his love for you, and parent out of this enduring, patient love.

Zac Harrel is pastor of First Baptist Church in Gustine, Texas.