

# Living God's Grace for Our Kids

FROM  
AAF

A friend just told us this story, from a few years back, of work and family values gone awry.

*A famously demanding conference president (now retired) tells his pastors, "Your pulpit first, your family second." This is his mantra for, among other things, motivating compliance with Ingathering and baptismal goals.*

*But a theology professor at the Adventist college in his union teaches would-be pastors that your family comes first, then your job. Hearing this, the conference president confronts the professor: "Why," he demands, "are you saying this to your students?"*

*The professor shoots back, "I'll tell you why when you tell me why your son has left the church."*

We laughed over the professor's zinger of a comeback.

Perhaps the laugh came too easily.

We have, between us, six children. Naturally, we're proud of them, and we hope—and every day we pray—that they will take their cues from Christ and share their lives with his community on earth.

But we know, too, that having kids is a little like bathing a cat: you don't really control what is going to happen. You might achieve a fine balance between work and family. Even so, when it comes to your children, you know you'll be surprised, perhaps in ways that disappoint you.

Like God.

Grace must have been invented with parents in mind. As a father and mother might have done, God granted us our lives, and made sure we had what it took to make a difference in the world. And that just meant risk.

Think about it:

You make a gift—or a series of gifts—to your children. You give them a vision of how to live; you give them power and freedom to shape their world; you realize creative people can make mistakes and determine to love them through

the tough times and the easy. And just like that you have put on the mantle of grace: you've decided, no matter what, to give, and keep on giving, the gifts your children need.

In our thoughtful moments, then, we both realize a simple truth: we've been called to live God's grace for our kids.

We enjoy the writer Anne Lamott, and she tells about the time when she was "cracking up"—drinking and sleeping around and feeling suicidal and wondering whether God could have a single positive feeling about her.

In desperation, Lamott visited the new minister at a nearby church. And when she wondered about how God could love her, he said: "God has to love you. That's God's job."

Well, it's our job to live God's grace for our kids; to love them as God loves us.

Except that we'd like to say we get to love them. Sure, it's scary. Sure, it's a test of patience. But it's a wonder just the same—a job that's as good a gift as you could ever ask for or receive.

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