

# Grace and Raising Teenagers – *Rom 5:20-6:14*

Children of the Conquest #10

**Introduction** – Parenting little ones takes much grace. Raising teenagers takes a different kind of grace. And God gives grace like manna – just what you need for today. Grace to believe the promises. Grace to grow in wisdom. Grace to love. Grace to speak the truth in love. Grace to shift tactics and strategies. Grace to find methods that work for you while employing the commands and principles you must obey. The scriptures teach that God gives so much grace that we might be tempted to think that we can just “*sin that grace may abound*,” and by God’s grace, the grace we give our covenant children in their transitioning years will cause them to wonder the same at times.

Today, we live in a world that hates children. This world hates little children, murders them, neglects them, and abdicates their responsibilities to educate them. We hate teenagers in a different way. We propagate the lies that adolescence, by nature, is a time of rebellion against parents. Our youth-worship culture, social media ghettos, and the demand for autonomy at any age all promote this lie. The modern evangelical church caters to the folly of autonomous, youth-centered entertainment and self-love ministry. In stark contrast, we are called to think biblically about this time of life and how we might best shepherd them as parents and as the church. And this takes grace (see above paragraph).

**The Way of Grace in Generations** (Psalm 127:3-5, Mal 2:15) – These individuals are not autonomous beings, but members of covenant households who are to mature in their faith and understanding of the promises and obligations laid upon them. The goal is faithful, godly offspring, standing at our side against the darkness and walking in the light. There is no planned generation-gap in covenant succession. The next generation joins in the victorious spread of Christ’s gospel and His call to disciple the nations – they are to join with us. Therefore, boring testimonies should be commonplace for our young people. Except there is nothing boring if their testimony includes growing up in faithfulness against the wiles of the devil (Eph 6:10-13).

**Overwhelming Grace** (Rom 5:20-21) – These verses conclude an explanation by Paul about the impact of God’s grace given to those in Christ. Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more. The declaration of the Gospel is a victory cry over sin and death for anyone and everyone who is found in Jesus Christ. You could never add up enough sins to override the overwhelming grace that is ours in Christ. A home full of this grace will become a place where teenagers may be tempted to think, “wait, can we just sin and grace will abound?” Chapter 6 will address that wrongheadedness, but a home filled with such unconditional, accepting grace should anticipate that such wrongheadedness will come up – *and this is a good thing*. This will provide an atmosphere in your home where your kids will know they can come to you freely with anything.

**Identify Them By Their Baptism** (Rom 6:3-10) – Regardless of our theological differences on baptism, we are all to teach our children early, based on the promises of God to parents, to believe them for themselves, and reckon their faith as theirs early on, certainly also watching for more and more fruit as they grow with us in the covenant. This is why it is our practice to baptize infants, or to baptize professing children at an early age, and then to admit them to the Table as covenant members.

**Grab Them By Their Baptism** (Rom 6:11-14) – Having been baptized into Christ’s death, your children are on a trajectory with you (v5, 8). But, like us, it comes in fits and waves. When they are tempted to disobey Christ, like any other disciple, Paul calls us to grab them and say, “hey, you’re baptized, you can’t do that.” They are to consider themselves dead to sin and alive to Christ (v11). Paul then begins to work out this grace into our daily lives. By grace we are reckoned dead to our sins, and by grace we believe and act as though we believe ourselves to be in Christ.

**The Only Difference for Teenagers** – The problem is not that teenagers go through a crisis of faith (do I really believe I’m saved, or, do I really love this as my own) and no one else ever does. The difference is that it is becoming a self-conscious crisis for the first time (or first times) in their lives. Having grown up in a Christian home, the Christian teen, like any other teen, now has more knowledge, imagination, strength, and a host of new temptations. One result of this is that your teenager needs a father and a mother more than ever before even though he or she looks more self-sufficient. Car keys and opportunities to be away from the home are not an indication of the need for less instruction, oversight, and mentorship (along with affection), but rather for more.

**Loving Teenagers** – Keeping in mind that they are to stand with us in the gate, we must avoid the temptation to promote a generation-gap mentality and instead cultivate a covenant community culture. So what is the second greatest commandment? And who is your neighbor? The answer is the teenager living in your home, who often appears to be less lovable than when he was a cute, little toddler. 1 Tim 5:8 teaches us that the commandments of God are even more important in the home. Loving them should be a response of our obedience to the Lord, and not how we are “feeling” toward them.

**Affection** – Pour it on and do not wait for them to ask for it. It will be different now, but all the more reason you must pour it on in appropriate ways. They are young enough to be insecure but old enough to hide it from you. And most are longing for more physical affection than ever before.

**Forgiveness** (Col 3:13) – Because your teenagers appear more responsible (often only an appearance), their sins (along with their stumbling attempts to be adults, their new clumsinesses and shortcomings) somehow seem more personally offensive. You must still discipline for sin, but you must even more than before make sure you are not taking it personally. For instance, it is true that they should respect their parents – but not necessarily because you have some inalienable right to it.

**The Gracious Song of God and Your Teenager’s Story** (Deut 32:7-12) - Let your testimony be to your teenagers what God was doing, is doing, and will do with His people – and show them how they are a part of that story. Teenagers are often consumed with their own story, driven by their own desires and struggling with their growing, distinct identity. While we want to encourage that (their ownership of their faith and their Lord), they desperately need to see the larger story and how theirs is simply a part of that story – a glorious and good story, a story of grace victorious over sin. They are the next verse in the Song of Victory, the Song of the Covenant, the Song of Christ. Sing to them this song. Oh, and you will need much grace to do so (see first paragraph again).

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