

PARENT CONVERSATIONS

In the October issue, we heard from three moms who shared some of their “mom fails” and how they handled them. (Visit forwardinchrist.net/mom-fails to catch up on those.) This month, three dads share their experiences with the ups and downs of parenthood. May all these real-life parenting stories remind us that there are no perfect parents—but thankfully we have a perfect Savior.

—Nicole Balza

PARENTING FAILURES—AND HOW TO RECOVER: DAD EDITION

EVERY NIGHT WHEN my children were young, we would pray together before they went to sleep. Among other things, we prayed:

Now I lay me down to sleep.
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take. Amen.

One night when my daughter was five, she started crying after that prayer.

“Isabel, what’s wrong?” I asked.

“Daddy, I don’t want to die,” she sobbed.

I was caught off guard. I wanted to talk about how great heaven was, but, for some reason, the first words to come out of my mouth were, “Oh, Isabel, we’re all going to die.”

Before I could continue, the floodgates were opened. “I don’t want you to die!” she wailed as she threw her arms around me.

My heart broke. I tried to fix it. I talked about Jesus and the heaven we would enjoy together, but it was too late. She couldn’t hear me. Fear and anxiety had taken hold. To this day, my 20-year-old daughter still struggles to sleep at night. Anxiety is still a daily burden she bears.

I know that our conversation 15 years ago was not the only contributing factor to her insomnia or anxiety, but it certainly didn’t help. Ever since that night, I have

prayed that God give me wisdom when talking to my kids. He often does. Sometimes, however, the words still don’t come out right.

God promises to work all things—including our mistakes as parents—for our children’s good (Romans 8:28).

My comfort is knowing that God’s power is best demonstrated in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). Though painful, my daughter’s struggles are part of his plan of love for her good. God promises to work all things—including our mistakes as parents—for our children’s good (Romans 8:28).

I know that God loves my daughter more than I do. When I fail to be the dad I should be, he forgives me because of Jesus. I trust he will continue to help my daughter to grow and mature through (and sometimes despite) me.

That is my hope and confidence as a father, even when the words don’t come out right.



Andrew Schroer is pastor at Redeemer, Edna, Texas. He and his wife, Clariza, have two children, Isabel and Andy.

I ONCE TRIED to impress my boys with a flip on the trampoline. I did a face-plant instead.

“That was an epic fail!” my boys laughed.

Really? Epic? I thought. Poems will be written? Songs will be sung telling the tale of Dad’s epic fail?

I asked my boys what they thought my real “dad fails” were. Without hesitation, they responded:

- I don’t listen well.
- I slip into “lecture mode.”
- I lose my cool.

- I think I know it all and want to make sure they know I do.

Ouch. Humbling.

But worse than those fails are the times I've failed God. I promise I'll do better. I promise I'll be more patient with my boys. I promise I'll be less selfish. But before long, I fail God again.

I know I'm not a perfect dad. I'm far from it. But I also know that I'm forgiven for my failures—by God and my boys.

We've all failed God. And they're *epic* fails. Literally. In the Bible, poems have been written and songs have been sung telling the tale of our most epic fail. And this is no face-plant on a trampoline. This epic fail has eternal consequences. We all deserve to spend an eternity in hell apart from God.

So how do we recover from our epic fails? Confess. I apologized to my boys: "I'm sorry that I'm not a very good dad at times."

And my boys tell me more often than I'd like to admit and maybe less often than I need to hear: "I forgive you, Dad. And so does Jesus."

My boys become my confessors. Along with my associate at church and my wife, they often assure me that I am forgiven. And I am grateful for it. I need to hear often "I forgive you. So does Jesus."

I know I'm not a perfect dad. I'm far from it. But I also know that I'm forgiven for my failures—by God and my boys.

Parents, we will fail, but Christ has redeemed us and promises to work through our failures. God's love for you will never fail: "Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet [God's] unflinching love for you will not be shaken" (Isaiah 54:10).

That's God's unflinching love for you. And it is *epic!* In the Bible, poems have been written and songs sung telling the tale of our Savior's epic, unflinching love for us!



Rob Guenther and his wife, Becky, are raising four boys in New Ulm, Minnesota. Rob serves as a pastor at St. John's, New Ulm.



OUR NEWBORN WOKE us up in the middle of the night. I wanted to give Mommy a few more precious moments of sleep, so it was Super Dad to the rescue.

I raced into the bedroom and cradled the child in my arms with plans to soothe him to sleep. However, as I walked through the doorway in the darkness, I accidentally bonked his head on the frame of the door.

Epic shrieks filled the halls of the Schultz home, waking Mommy up. Our son had a huge abrasion on his head. To make matters worse, we went to visit family friends the next day and introduced our firstborn to many with a huge mountain of a bruise on his head. Talk about a *Wizard of Oz* moment: "Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain or the huge lump on my child's head." #dadfail

Another time Mom was at a meeting 40 minutes away. We now had three children and had gone from man-to-man to zone coverage of the kids. While I was bathing the newborn after a colossal diaper overload, the five-year-old ran into a corner of a wall, cutting open his head and spewing blood everywhere. At the same time, the four-year-old was on the potty asking for assistance. Talk about the perfect storm. #dadfail

We can read all the books on how to parent, but they will never make us the perfect parents. Only Jesus and

his blood cover a multitude of sins, including the times we fail as parents. Jesus alone makes us perfect.

I say that it is okay for my children to see my faults—even for me to admit them, not hide them.

An old deodorant commercial said, "Never let them see you sweat." I disagree. I say that it is okay for my children to see my faults—even for me to admit them, not hide them. While it is easy to become self-reflective as the bumps and storms of life happen, my prayer is to model for my children that these are the vital times to focus on our heavenly Father. By grace, he alone carries us and forgives us every time we fail. Of all the lessons I could teach my children, God's love and forgiveness are and should always be at the top of the list, because with him we never fail!



Clark Schultz and his wife, Kristin, are raising three young boys. Clark is pastor at Shepherd of the Hills, West Bend, Wisconsin.

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