

PARENT CONVERSATIONS

What promises of God calm your heart when parenting feels overwhelming?

Parenting often feels overwhelming. Parenting without God's promises? That I can't even comprehend! What a blessing to have these promises to cling to when everything else in life feels so out of control. As I read these articles, I could feel God strengthening me again for the job he's called me to do as a parent.

—Nicole Balza

I FEEL CONFIDENT I'm in good company when I say I'm a chronic overthinker. Every night as I try to fall asleep, my mind is abuzz with the events of my day. There is a play-by-play happening in my head—and somehow it's worse than anything Joe Buck and Troy Aikman could have prepared.

Was I too harsh with my preschooler when he asked (for what felt like the 108th time) if today was his turn for show-and-tell?

Why doesn't my toddler want to potty train? They say to wait until she's ready. How do I know?

Did I spend enough time with my kids today? Do they know they're a priority—even as I try to manage a household, maneuver my calendar, and maintain a career?

Do they know they're my greatest gift, that I love them and Jesus loves them more?

These are the thoughts that entertain my brain. And while the subject matter varies day to day, the plot remains the same: Am I enough?

It's here that I pause. Because while my anxiety is challenging everything I've done, my heart knows it's not about me. It's not about what I've done—it's what he's done.

I don't have to be enough because Jesus is enough.

It's promised in the words of 2 Corinthians 12:9: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

I'm not a perfect parent—far from it. And while I strive to be a faithful steward of the two precious souls God has so graciously entrusted to my care, I know I fall short. I grow impatient and raise my voice; I struggle with prioritizing play and scroll my phone

more than I'd care to admit; I find myself wishing for an easier season while simultaneously mourning the moments that feel fleeting.

I don't have to be enough because Jesus is enough.

And yet, it's in my mountain of flaws that God grants me the most reassurance—his power is made perfect in my weakness. I don't have to be perfect because he already is.

I may not have the answers to solve chronic overthinking (sorry!) or stop invasive thoughts, but I do know the answer to the ever-popular chorus of "Am I enough?"

It goes like this: "God, today I did my best. I trust that you will do the rest."



Megan Neisius and her husband, Sam, have two children. They are members at Shepherd of the Hills, West Bend, Wisconsin.

AT TIMES, I find that my doubts and insecurities about my parenting are almost unbearable. Decisions I made years ago come back to haunt me—like when I let one of my children cry it out or when I lost my temper and yelled, "I'm doing my best!" at one of my toddlers.

When these dark memories, my parenting failures, come to mind, I feel so much shame. My children are a gift from God, but I don't always treat them this way. I love them more than almost anything,

but that doesn't matter because my love is imperfect. It is rife with selfishness, pride, and entitlement. This is when I remember that unlike my love, God's love is perfect. It is sacrificial, never-ending, and greater than any love that I have for anyone in my life, even my children. He will never hold my sins against me, even when I put my family before him. What a weight is taken off my shoulders when I remember this. There is no need to be perfect, because Jesus was, is, and always will be.

God's amazing love is always there—while I'm sitting on a peeling tile floor in my first house in Milwaukee holding a baby and a toddler as all three of us cried, but also when we are laughing while we have a dance party. His constant presence fills me with relief because I know that he is with not only me but also my children. When they leave home and head off to work and college, God will be with them. When they are hurt by others or the ones doing the hurting, God will be with them. When they move away and I don't hear from them as often as I want, God will be with them. This promise of God's constant love, care, and presence in the lives of his children is invaluable.

However, the greatest comfort of all is that Jesus died, rose, and will come again. This promise is the reason we have hope for the future. It's one to go back to again and again and teach to our children.

I don't always remember God's promises because I more often look to myself or to the world for answers. Although this makes life more difficult for me, it does not change the promises themselves. God's love, presence, and most important, the promise we have for eternal life remain.



Karyn Clemons and her husband, Ben, are raising three children in New Ulm, Minnesota. Karyn is a teacher at Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School, New Ulm.



SHE WAS going to have a baby. It must have been terrifying. Raising a child isn't easy, especially back then.

Imagine the struggles Mary must have faced. But even before she was pregnant, the angel Gabriel gave her a comforting promise.

I learned the verse as "Nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 1:37). But NIV 2011 translates it differently: "No word from God will ever fail."

Both are great translations. The word translated "word" can also mean "thing." And "impossible"

can also mean "fail." So, "No thing with God will be impossible" or "No word with God will fail." It's the translator's choice.

I'm glad I've learned both translations and both are true. No thing is impossible with God. There is no challenge too big that he can't handle. And no word from God will ever fail. Every promise of grace that God has ever made will come true. We can bank on it.

Your worst parenting moment does not define you—or your child. Grace is bigger than guilt.

Here are some of my favorite promises from God that I go to when parenting feels overwhelming.

- 1. God is with you.** "Do not fear, for I am with you. . . . I will strengthen you and help you" (Isaiah 41:10). You're not parenting alone—not at 2 A.M. when the baby is crying, not at 1 A.M. when your teen is still out long after his curfew. You are never parenting alone.
- 2. God loves your child even more than you do.** "Everyone belongs to me, the parent as well as the child," he promises (Ezekiel 18:4). I think of parenting as babysitting for God. My sons are not mine ever since they were baptized. As much as you love your kids, God loves them infinitely more. He chose them before the world was made. He will never stop loving your children and will always do what is best for them.
- 3. God's grace covers your failures.** "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12). Your worst parenting moment does not define you—or your child. Grace is bigger than guilt. You are forgiven. So is your child.
- 4. God is omnipotent and will never break his promises.** And of course, Luke 1:37 is one of my favorites. God will keep all these promises. So we can trust him to help us in this challenging, fearful, and sometimes overwhelming task of raising his children.



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



Interested in more? Visit forwardinchrist.net/parents for more parenting resources, including articles, podcasts, and videos.