



Part 1: Real vs. Ideal

Early in parenthood, Andy and Sandra Stanley noticed a few things about the parents in their orbit who seemed to be doing a good job. Effective parents tended to have fewer rules, were not afraid of their children rejecting them, and facilitated their kid's interests, strengths, and talents rather than insisting their children embrace what was most interesting to them as parents. Effective parents also prioritized relationship over experience. But there was one other factor, which is what we will focus on today. Effective parents had healthy marriages. Not perfect; healthy. In fact, perhaps the best parenting tool of all is a healthy marriage.

Start Talking

1. Think through pop culture as well as your own personal experience. Who are your top three couples of all time, and why? (It's okay to include fictional couples! Just have fun with the list.)

Looking Back

1. Peter instructed his readers to: "Love each other deeply." This is above-and-beyond love for the sake of unity. Who did you determine needed a dose of deep love from you?
2. Peter instructed his readers to: "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling." Who needs an extra dose of hospitality from you right now? How did you extend that last week?
3. Peter instructed his readers to: "...use whatever gift you have received to serve others..." What skills, resources or connections did you leverage to serve someone else in last week?
4. Who in your life did you charge with keeping you accountable when it comes to maintaining Peter's posture towards suffering in your everyday actions? Did they hold up their end of the deal?



What About You?

1. Whether you have children or not, what parenting traits and practices inspire you when you see them displayed by friends, family, or acquaintances?
2. What pitfalls do you see that you would want to avoid?
3. Looking back, what was your parents' or primary caretakers' greatest strength?
4. Did the people who raised you tend to opt for truth and standards over grace? Or overly-lenient grace at the expense of predictable standards? When did they get the "full dose of both" balance just right?
5. What relationships have you seen that inspired you to be a better partner? What was it about them you were inspired to imitate?

Look It Up

Read the following passage before answering the questions below:

1 Corinthians: 15 : 3. John 3 : 16. Matthew 5 : 27–28. Matthew 19: 10. John 1 : 14 – 17.

1. What implications do you draw from the fact that the good news of Jesus doesn't start with a bunch of ideal prescriptions for what to do, but with the simple reality that Jesus died in order to conquer the chaotic messiness of the real world?
2. Some of Jesus's moral commands might strike us as not necessarily misguided, but extreme— a requirement of perfection. How do you personally resolve the tension that Jesus's teachings contain both extremely high moral standards, and grace for our inevitable failure to live up to these ideals?
3. In your understanding, are "grace" and "truth," competing or complimentary forces?
4. Where do you see Jesus giving full doses of truth during his ministry on Earth? Full doses of grace?
5. What does Christ's "law of love" require of a person in marriage?

Putting It All Together

1. What aspects of yourself and your approach to life are keeping you from being the best partner you can? What would it look like for you to put other people first in that area of your life?
2. What parts of your life would "a full dose of truth" probably disrupt for the better? What would it look like for you to change?
3. When do you find yourself overly-concerned with holding other people to ideal standards? How can you extend them "a full dose of grace" this week? What will it take to do so?
4. In what ways are you denying yourself grace right now? How can you remind yourself on a daily basis that Jesus has conquered your inadequacies?

