


2012

# Six Ways to Keep the "Good" in Your Boy: Guiding Your Son from His Tweens to His Teens

Dannah (Barker) Gresh

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/alum\\_books](https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/alum_books)

 Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), [Family, Life Course, and Society Commons](#), and the [Gender and Sexuality Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Gresh, Dannah (Barker), "Six Ways to Keep the "Good" in Your Boy: Guiding Your Son from His Tweens to His Teens" (2012).  
*Alumni Book Gallery*. 367.  
[https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/alum\\_books/367](https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/alum_books/367)

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Cedarville, a service of the Centennial Library. It has been accepted for inclusion in Alumni Book Gallery by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Cedarville. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@cedarville.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@cedarville.edu).

---

# Six Ways to Keep the "Good" in Your Boy: Guiding Your Son from His Tweens to His Teens

**Keywords**

Mothers and sons, child rearing, parenting, sons, religious aspects, Dannah Gresh

**Disciplines**

Christianity | Family, Life Course, and Society | Gender and Sexuality | Religion

**Publisher**

Harvest House Publishers

**Publisher's Note**

First chapter (Download button) reproduced with the kind permission of [Harvest House Publishers](#).

**ISBN**

9780736945790

## Is There a Mouse in That Cookie Box?

---

---

A box of cookies and a dead mouse.

The combination conjures up one of the proudest memories of mothering my wonderful son, Robby. (If you meet him, you can call him Rob. But I can't. He's still *my* Robby even if he's the size of a linebacker.) He was a freshman at Grace Prep high school and was just returning from a school-assigned Random Act of Kindness when these two mismatched objects—mouse and cookies—mingled together to create an equally odd mixture of emotions.

Just hours earlier, armed with nothing more than a few boxes of cookies and several rakes, he and a few friends had set out to do some good. They'd come back a little flustered, but laughing their experience off like four cool 15-year-old boys should.

"We just got yelled at," said Robby, wearing the words like a badge of courage.

"By whom?" I asked.

"Some crazy woman who thought there must be a mouse in the cookies we were trying to give her," he answered defensively.

"What!" I was just a little aggravated, having been the one who had issued the assignment. How could anyone react with anger and suspicion (particularly in our small, friendly town) to a box of cookies and an offer to do yard work? Surely they must have misunderstood. "Tell me what happened. Play-by-play," I said.

"Well, we knocked on the lady's door to give her the cookies and ask permission to rake her leaves," Robby answered. "When we tried to hand her the cookies she looked afraid and angrily said, 'Is there a dead mouse in that box?'"

The other boys snickered. I could see that they thought it was funny, but that it also bothered them.

I was having a hard time believing it.

"We promised there wasn't a mouse in there, but she just couldn't believe we were there to do anything good. So one of the guys said, 'Look, we just want to show you God's love in a practical way.'"

This made me smile. It was what they'd been taught. "Transfer the credit of this good act to God," I'd said in class.

"What'd she say when you said that?" I asked.

"She grabbed the cookies, said, 'Rake if you want to,' and slammed the door in our faces!" said Robby. "So, we raked."

I could tell that the guys were still a bit shaken, and I was a bit angry that they hadn't been met with the reward of a simple "thank you."

A few weeks later, God brought the whole thing full circle with a letter that came in the mail. One of the members of Robby's group got to read it out loud in chapel. I wish I still had it. It went something like this:

*Dear Grace Prep:*

*Recently some boys from your school came here to deliver cookies to my daughter and me. They also raked our leaves. I'm embarrassed to say that I didn't trust them. I am sorry. (For the record, they were really yummy cookies.)*

### **Goodness**

[good-nis] "the state or quality of being good; a euphemism for God"

—actual definition found at [dictionary.com](http://dictionary.com)

*I think God sent those boys here.*

*You see, my husband—my daughter's father—died recently and it has been tough. Just that morning my daughter and I kind of put a test out there for God. We prayed, saying, "If you're really there and you really see us, show up!"*

*When he did, we didn't recognize him right away. But I have no doubt that God sent those high-school boys to remind us that he sees us.*

*Thank you.*

You could have heard a pin drop in that room of high-school kids when the letter was read. We were all simply struck with the power of goodness.

But here's why this wonderful memory not only floods my heart with pride, but also makes me sad: *We've lost our faith in the goodness of boys and men.* And not wholly without reason.

### **Where Have All the Good Men Gone?**

A title of a recent *Wall Street Journal* article inquired, "Where Have the Good Men Gone?" A current Amazon bestseller seeks to answer the question, *Is There Anything Good About Men?* Since the 2004 coining of the word "adultescent,"<sup>1</sup> we've had something to call the young adult male who is so busy playing Call of Duty on his PlayStation 4 that he has no real-life call of duty. No honor. No integrity. No goodness. Just a seventh-grade mind-set and responsibility level trapped in the flabby body of an adult who often still lives at home or in a tacky bachelor pad with other adultescents. The phenomenon is what caused Kay S. Hymowitz to pen the book *Manning Up*, in which she writes,

*Not so long ago, average mid-twentysomethings, both male and female, had achieved most of the milestones of adulthood: high school diploma, financial independence, marriage, and children. These days [the males] hang out in a novel sort of limbo, a hybrid state of semi-hormonal adolescence and responsible self-reliance.<sup>2</sup>*

High-school English teacher Joe Carmichiel has written a book entitled *Permanent Adolescence: Why Boys Don't Grow Up*, because "a large number of today's teenagers, especially boys, see no reason to accept or pursue adulthood since it is of so little value to the larger culture."<sup>3</sup> So, with no motivation to *do* anything, many of these young men remain in a state of wimpy complacency well into their twenties, even thirties.

Along with this state of immaturity that many boys will embrace as they grow older is a culturally acceptable pressure for boys to be bad—both complacent and void of character. By the time a boy is finished with high school, he is likely to have three crucial areas of character ripped right out of him:

1. Over 50 percent of young men will have become sexually active in a casual-sex culture where they're likely to have an average of 9.7 sexual partners before they graduate from college.<sup>4</sup> (There goes his purity.)
2. Most of them will be exposed to porn as a tween or early teen, with the median age of first exposure being about 11. This catapults many of them into a world of double-mindedness where they are one boy at home and in public—and another entirely in their private world. (There goes his integrity.)
3. Many will have succumbed to an emasculated version of manhood that strips them of their drive to be leaders and protectors who do good. (There goes his honor.)

Our boys need to be taught to grow up.

And to be good.

---

---

While *Six Ways to Keep the "Little" in Your Girl* cried out for us to band together against the culture's pressure for our little girls to grow up too fast, this book pleads with you to join us in raising sons who are prepared to embrace the responsibility of growing up.

---

---



It's been our goal to create a character base for our son to be a man of integrity, honor, and purity. Bob and I want him to be good. Fortunately, our life work led me into the depths of research, and I learned that we had to start building a foundation for our son to rise to the call of manhood...when he was still just our "good boy"! Raising a son to reflect your value system when he is a man is—in part—a matter of introducing those values to him in an age-appropriate manner when he is a *tween*. Social science offers us statistical lines of footprints showing how a boy will turn out based on what he is exposed to and when. Sadly, our boys have got a tough battle ahead. It's been a long time since they've seen anything but "adultescent" or "bad" examples of manhood dominating our culture.

### Why Are Boys "Bad"?

Robert Coles, a pioneer in the field of moral intelligence, brings clarity to the definition *badness* when he writes,

*Bad boys display a "heightened destructive self-absorption, in all its melancholy stages." In essence, we go bad when "we lose sight of our obligation to others."*<sup>5</sup>

Badness is not simply the loss of innocence, purity, integrity, and honor, but also the loss of vision to see the needs of others and to act on them. It's a complacent, self-absorbed lifestyle that is void of character.

I think we have a bad-boy mentality in our culture for two primary reasons.

*The first reason boys become bad is that the feminist movement has told us they are bad.* Michael Gurian, author of *The Wonder of Boys*, though seeming to embrace the feminist movement as a whole, points out a few devastating myths it introduced to convince our boys that they are "bad." Here are two that resonate with me:

*Myth Number One: "that masculinity is responsible for the world's ills and femininity is the world's salvation."*<sup>6</sup>

*Myth Number Two: "males destroy, females create; males*



*stand in the way of positive spiritual/social values; males are inherently violent."*<sup>7</sup>

While a deeper study of the feminist movement would betray an agenda to introduce these fallacies, we don't have to get that academic to see how much we are influenced to believe these myths in our politically correct culture.

Just consider how prevalently they are portrayed in the media. Television alone reinforces them. *Two and a Half Men*, "the biggest hit comedy of the past decade" according to the *New York Times*, features a hedonist formerly played by Charlie Sheen. After eight seasons, the show was stalled when Sheen went into rehab for drug use. He was then fired for making disparaging remarks about the show's producers. On and off screen he was self-absorbed and void of character. Other shows display the contrast of the valuable female to the valueless male. Reruns of *The Simpsons* portray Lisa as bright and beautiful and Bart as out of shape and selfish. Co-ed television commercials often portray the guy as a doofus and the girl as smart. It's funny. It really is. But how much of it can we expose ourselves to before we believe it? And that takes me to my next concern.

*The second reason boys are "bad" is that they have become what has been expected of them, just like any individual tends to fulfill what has been prophesied about them.* Of course, they've had help from their parents (or lack thereof), their culture (and its emasculation), their economy (and its consumeristic "me" mentality), and their churches (who haven't done much to stand against the feminist untruths). But today's men as a whole have pretty much rolled over and taken it.

It's probably a good idea for me, Bob, to step in here. I'm a guy. If anyone's going to throw us under the bus, it should be me. It has always befuddled me that the prettiest, nicest girls are always attracted to the bad boys. From the jock who bullies everyone at school to the kid in a leather jacket who doles out drugs after school, nice girls often go after the bad boys. In the *Twilight* series, bad boy Edward Cullen makes good girl Bella Swan swoon. In real life, the stars live out the scenario. Kevin



Federline was the top bad boy of the tabloids when he nabbed the most famous girl on the planet at the height of her career, Britney Spears. Katy Perry, former Christian music artist gone sexual tease, pledged herself to bad boy Russell Brand.

I think that the constant drip of these scenarios into our spirits makes us want to be bad boys. Let's be real: A guy desires a beautiful girl, and while the ones in the headlines might not be all that chaste, they're often *portrayed* as the good girl taken by the bad boy. And guess what? Guys want nice girls. So, we begin to believe that maybe we're supposed to be bad.

And if we're not, we're boring. Come on. The media glorifies the bad boys—from *Grease's* Danny Zuko to *Pirates of the Caribbean's* Captain Jack Sparrow—not the plain-vanilla good guys. I didn't watch this show, but Dannah says *Gilmore Girls* played to this big time when Rory fell for beautiful boy Dean *until* bad boy Jess came to town. The bad boy is so often the one the girl wants and celebrates.

Conversely, there aren't a lot of movies being made about Billy Graham, the kid who called 9-1-1 and delivered his mom's baby, or the apostle Paul. These are true heroes...but they're good. And good is boring, according to movie producers. Since no one rises up to celebrate the good, most guys—though innately built to be conquerors—roll over and become boring.

In some twisted place in our minds, we'd much rather be bad than boring because that's how you get the girl. But many of us are afraid of



**Click here!**

[Gotoellerslie.com/intercession.html](http://Gotoellerslie.com/intercession.html) (on the ministry website of authors and speakers Eric and Leslie Ludy) to see a fantastic, motivating short film (seven and a half minutes) on the role of intercession in raising up good boys.

"One of the key definitions of Christianity could be is a man or woman who...is made strong. Why? So that they are *useful* to God and they are not just constantly inwardly fighting demons. They can be outward-focused." —Eric Ludy

being the real bad boy. So we just get complacent. We roll over and stay in some limbo—a state of in-between. Not really bad. Not really good. Or so we think.

In reality, *this complacency is the absolute root of badness.*

## The Tree

Complacency was at the root of the first bad move among men. (Yes—the bad move of all time.) Adam had the most complacent moment of all when he stood at the foot of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. It was Eve who wore the pants in the first family during this catastrophic moment. She took the lead and reached for the fruit of the Tree. Adam just got all quiet, passive and...well, boring. The Scriptures don't note that he was deceived, tempted, or lied to like Eve. Just that he went along with it.

Some theologians believe that there was something in the way that Eve was crafted which made her more vulnerable to deception. (Just consider how often we women are prone to think things like "I'm fat!" Haven't seen too many guys obsessing over that thought. Or maybe you've been prone to believe the lie "No one really likes me." Men don't struggle with that as often or as easily. Women are just prone to believing lies.) However, many believe that Satan approached Eve because he was attempting to throw over the created order by getting her to take leadership over her husband. And Adam seemed to passively accept this evil situation to gratify his flesh. Sounds a bit too much like many men of today.

Complacency led to the first sin. (Perhaps, had Adam chosen to speak truth to Eve, he could have led her away from that horrible original sin.) His failure to lead changed the course of history. We believe that the same kind of complacency that showed itself at the foot of the Tree still leads men to badness.

## Goodness vs. Badness

While a bad boy's greatest desire is to live according to his desires, a good boy, according to Robert Coles, has an outward focus:

*Good...boys...have learned to take seriously the very notion, the desirability of goodness—living up to the Golden Rule.*<sup>8</sup>

The Greek word for *goodness* (used in our take-to-heart verse, Romans 12:21) appears in the New Testament in three forms, all of which are rooted in the Hebrew word *tod*, which means “usefulness” or “beneficialness.” Are we bringing up boys who understand their call of duty to be useful contributors to society, to be beneficial to others?

*Goodness* is the quality that makes us put others ahead of ourselves. It's the moral compass that keeps the world safe, happy, and working. It's the drive that makes us want to function in families rather than isolation. It's the internal road sign that takes us away from our own desires and toward the destiny of meeting the needs of others. Without it, we are “bad.” That's probably why all of us—male and female—are called to goodness.

*Do not be overcome by evil,  
but overcome evil with good.*

Romans 12:21

## God is good

The ultimate reason we must raise our boys to be good is that it reflects the character of God. His goodness is a bedrock truth of Scripture and is inseparable from his nature. If we are to be a picture of him, we must possess goodness. He is good not only in a general sense, but he is good *to* us and *for* us. This element of his character expresses his selflessness and desire to exist on behalf of others. When people are good, they act *toward* and *for* others, as opposed to losing sight of others as their own needs and desires consume them.