

I'M IN



WE'RE TEACHING THIS

"Are you in?" It's a question we all answer over and over again. When there's a party, when our coach says it's time for tryouts, when we're offered a summer job, when our friends go to the movies, or when someone invites us to church, we all have the chance to decide if we're "in" or "out" for that particular activity. Sometimes the answer is an easy, "Count me in!" Other times it's tougher. There are good reasons on both sides. Some of Jesus' friends were faced with the same

decision of whether they were "in" or "out." They had good reasons to join the Jesus movement, but they also had some pretty compelling reasons to step out—things like doubt, guilt, pride, and the fear of what they might miss. As we get to know these sometimes famous and devoted followers, we'll talk about the decision they faced, why they could have walked away, and what led them to say, "I'm in."

THINK ABOUT THIS

By Carey Nieuwhof

*Because when you find yourself the villain,
In the story you have written
It's plain to see
That sometimes the best intentions
Are in need of redemption
Would you agree?*

– Death Cab for Cutie, "You Are a Tourist"

So Death Cab for Cutie is a band—just to be clear—one that's on my playlist a lot these days. As that song played through my earbuds, it hit me that it describes how I sometimes feel about my parenting.

No new parent begins by saying, "I hope I mess up my child's life." Whoever sets out to be the villain in the story? But at one point or another, we end up there, don't we?

- You leave for vacation but are yelling at the kids before you're even out of town.
- You're at home most nights, but you're far too tired to engage.
- Your kids repeated patterns of behavior drive you crazy, and you end up resenting them.
- Your date night to nurture your marriage starts with an argument and ends with a meltdown.
- You make empty threats to your kids that would make you wince if you heard other parents make them. But you are all out of tricks, so you threaten anyway.

And sometimes the temptation is to think that our failures should disqualify us as a parent. At least as a good parent. It must certainly disqualify us from being a godly parent.

But when you think that, you would be wrong.

What if that actually puts you in line with a great list of characters God used in significant ways? What if that actually qualifies you?

Peter was Jesus' best friend, but Peter betrayed Jesus—badly. You would think that would put Peter out of the running to be a New Testament hero. But Jesus built the church on Peter anyway.

Moses seemed like a fine fellow until he murdered someone. Shouldn't that push him off God's short list? Apparently not. God made Moses into one of the greatest leaders in the Old Testament.

Why? Why does God use people as flawed as that?

I think weakness puts us in touch with our need for God.

It reminds us that God is God, and we are not. That we need help. That there is a power greater than our natural brilliance (or lack of it) at work in the world. And that grace flows between the cracks in our lives.

God's strength is most evident when the people He's working with are weak.

What if the very thing you think is disqualifying you right now is actually qualifying you for a new chapter in your life in Christ?

What if your weakness was a portal to new strength?

What if you are a parent turning in a brand new way to Christ's love and you were able to give your son and daughter a front row seat to the grace of God?

I bet your kids would never forget the change they see in you. And you could one day tell them how it happened.

For more from Carey Nieuwhof or to connect to a wider community of parents, check out www.parentcue.org.

TRY THIS

Every parent wants to be a better parent, but as our kids get older it can be tough to know what we should do at this phase of development. This week, try taking one small step to sharpen your parenting skills. Maybe for you that means...

- Reading one chapter of a book about parenting teenagers.
- Finding and subscribing to a parenting blog or podcast.
- Calling a parent with kids a little older than yours and schedule a coffee.

- Making an appointment with a counselor to focus on a specific issue.

As your kid progresses through middle and high school, he or she is going to change a lot. You've probably already seen some of that. So, it's a great time to invest in learning how to love them and lead them best at this phase and the next one.